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MY PARIS NOTE-BOOK

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"AN ENGLISHMAN IN PARIS"

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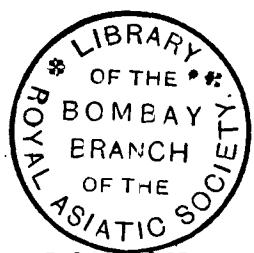

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1894
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TO

DR. GEORGE LICHTENBERG,

BUT FOR WHOSE UNREMITTING CARE I SHOULD
NOT BE ALIVE TO WRITE THIS OR
ANY OTHER BOOK.

THE AUTHOR.

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I AM beginning this book on the last day of the year (1893), and not without a certain feeling of sadness; for I cannot help remembering that exactly thirty-eight years have elapsed since I first caught sight of the Paris Boulevards. It was on the occasion of the return of some of the troops from the Crimea (Dec. 31, 1855). We had a police pass, and were enabled to walk

in the middle of the road, unhindered by any one. My two maternal grand-uncles, with whom I had come to stay, ostensibly on a short visit —which, in reality, only ended with their lives— were, to some extent, influential people, though neither of them ever did anything very remarkable. Nor was their influence due to wealth, their competence being but modest. They had both been army surgeons, and came to Paris shortly after Quatre-Bras and Waterloo, and never left the French capital again for any length of time until the day of their death; for, odd to relate, these two men, who had become Parisians to the backbone and finger-tips, objected to sleep their last sleep in or near the city of their adoption. They both lie in a little cemetery near Amsterdam, where the yellow waters of the Y splash against the shore. "It won't do to sleep one's last sleep at Père-la-Chaise or Montmartre," they said in French— they had left off speaking their mother tongue long before that—"it won't do to sleep one's last sleep there; the noise and din would be almost sure to disturb one; and if one took it into his head to revisit the old haunts, there might be a blank stare, if not a cold shoulder, for in Paris a man is forgotten in a fortnight by his best friends." From this it will be gathered that they did not cherish many illusions with regard to the durability of Frenchmen's

regret for, or recollection of, those who have gone before them; they themselves were, however, capable of very deep-seated attachments.

One of those deep-seated attachments was to the person of Louis Napoleon, whose mother and father they had known when the latter were queen and king of Holland. My relatives had, moreover, been able to render some slight services to the son before he became President of the Second Republic, and he, who was gratitude personified, gave them their *grandes* and *petites entrées* to the Tuileries when he ascended the Imperial throne. They availed themselves seldom of the former, but very often of the latter privilege. Louis Napoleon would have given them some lucrative appointment had they wanted it, but they were stubbornly though unostentatiously independent, and furthermore, almost contemptuously indifferent to money. When they settled in Paris they took to private practice. Up till within a short time of their death, their waiting-room was crowded for three hours in the morning, but I feel certain that the patients were much more numerous than the fees.

But though refusing to accept anything for themselves, they had no scruples about asking for others; and where their own resources failed, or those of their less wealthy friends were exhausted, they unhesitatingly applied to the

Emperor—when they dared no longer apply to Baron James de Rothschild. A mission to Baron James with such an object, entailed rising at six —whether it was summer or winter—in order to catch him after he had read the morning papers. "Reading the papers" was in this instance a mere figure of speech; Baron James rarely, if ever, read the papers himself; he had them read for him by a veteran actor named Charles Boudeville, who declaimed the "money article" with the same art he would have employed declaiming the soliloquy of Hamlet. We shall perhaps meet with him again.

Of the many stories told to me by my relatives concerning Baron James—for unfortunately they did not commit all their recollections to paper—here is one. One morning on being admitted to Baron James' private room, my uncle found him apparently deeply engaged in examining a magnificently chased golden vase of the most exquisite workmanship, and incrusted with precious stones. The temporary owner, one of the best known *bric-à-brac* dealers of those days, was holding forth upon its beauty, and giving a recital of its pedigree, interlarding nearly every sentence with a—"I feel certain, M. le Baron, that you have never seen anything like it before." The baron let him go on for nearly ten minutes uninterruptedly, during which time the sentence recurred at least a dozen times. At last he replied,

"You are right, I have never seen anything like it before; and what is the price?" "The price is 220,000 francs, M. le Baron," answered the dealer. "Hm," remarked Baron James, "it's a stiff figure; but you are right, I have never seen anything like it before. By-the-bye," he added, rising, and with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "if you'll wait a few minutes, I fancy I'll be able to show you something the like of which you have never seen before." With which he disappeared into an inner room. In a little while he returned, and the three stood chatting for a moment or so. "Now, if you'll come this way, I'll show you the thing the like of which you have never seen before. You may come too," he laughed, turning to my uncle, who was discreetly keeping back; "I do not think you have ever seen the like before." The three men entered the room together, but it was in vain that my uncle strained his eyes in search of the object Baron James had promised to show them. The furniture was of the plainest; bookcases all along the walls; and in the centre of the apartment a somewhat large table, on which lay a bandana handkerchief that looked as if it had been forgotten there by its owner. "Now, tell me if you have ever seen anything like this?" asked Baron James, carelessly lifting the *foulard*, and "discovering," as the dramatists say, a small mahogany tray containing two hundred and twenty

rouleaux of *louis* with their wrappers stripped off. The dealer was fairly dazzled, and did not answer. There was no "deal" that morning, the baron deciding that each should keep the thing the like of which the other had never seen.

To return to the Emperor, who, as I remarked just now, was gratitude personified. Shortly after his escape from Ham, and while he was in London, he went one night to see Bouffé in two of his remarkable impersonations, viz., the title-rôles of *Le Gamin de Paris* and *Michel Perrin*, both which pieces, if I mistake not, are known to Englishmen in their English guise of "Andy Blake" and "The Spy" respectively. The name of Dion Boucicault is inseparably connected with the first play, that of the late Benjamin Webster with the other; but, so far as I am aware, no English or foreign actor ever attempted to enact both characters. Bouffé, on the contrary, considered this as one of his greatest achievements, and felt so proud of it that on the days when *Le Gamin* held the bills, he used to appear on the Boulevards as a broken-down old man, painfully dragging himself along, though, in reality, he was as hale and hearty as ever; while on the days of *Michel Perrin*, he made it his business to repair to the popular promenade spruce and active, with the buoyant step of a young fellow, and all this in order to impress those who might have seen him on the previous night, or those who were

going to see him on that night, with the perfection of his method of changing his individuality. What he delighted in most, though, was to represent the stripling of fourteen or fifteen and the septuagenarian in the same evening; and during his London engagement at the time just mentioned, he did this very frequently. It was on one of these occasions that the future Emperor happened to be in the theatre in company with Count D'Orsay, who knew the great actor personally. Prince Louis was very anxious to see the transformation actually performed, and his friend took him to Bouffé's dressing-room in the interval between the two pieces, to the secret annoyance of the artist, who, first of all, did not care to discount his secrets before the rise of the curtain, and secondly, had not much time to entertain visitors. He had not the remotest idea of the identity of D'Orsay's companion. At the instance of D'Orsay, though, he let him stay, to Prince Louis's great delight. Just before they were leaving D'Orsay told Bouffé whom he had obliged.

Years went by, and Bouffé, from no fault of his own, came to grief. Failing health prevented him from taking a permanent engagement. His resources, which had never been very large—for it must be remembered that in the forties and fifties the salaries of even great actors were not what they are now—dwindled to their

lowest ebb. His debts soon began to worry him. His former comrades offered him their services for a farewell performance, which offers were gladly accepted. But Bouffé knew that the proceeds of an ordinary theatre, however crammed, and at twice the ordinary prices, would only be as a drop of water in the sea of his liabilities. As the day fixed upon for the performance drew near, his friends pressed him in vain to apply to Montigny, the manager of the Gymnase; Bouffé merely shook his head. "I'm waiting," he said. "Waiting for what?" they asked. "Waiting for the Opera House to be given to me," was the answer. They simply looked at him; they were under the impression that he had gone mad. But Bouffé knew what he was doing; he had sent a petition to the Emperor, and the moment the latter saw the signature he remembered the incident in London, and taking up a pen, wrote on the margin of the document—"*Pour M. Bouffé, oui, oui, oui. Napoléon.*"

The receipts exceeded £1000, exclusive of a handsome donation from the Emperor, but notwithstanding the general esteem in which Bouffé was held by his fellow actors, this then unprecedented favour aroused a good deal of jealousy, and a few days after the event my uncle Mark, who was the younger of the two, and who often went to see the Emperor either

early in the morning or after dinner, told him so. "Your Majesty has raised a hornet's nest about his head; henceforth every actor of note, and for that matter, every one who thinks himself one, will apply to your Majesty for the Opera." "And every one who has afforded me as genuine a quarter of an hour's amusement as Bouffé did, shall have it," was the answer. Thereupon the Emperor told my uncle the story as I have noted it down, winding up with a—"Besides, it may turn out that Bouffé has unwittingly rendered me a service. The time may come when I shall have to show a pleasant face under circumstances the reverse of pleasant, and the lesson learnt from Bouffé that evening will stand me in good stead. He showed me how to transform a young man into an old one; I fancy I shall have sufficient ingenuity to reverse the process, or better still, to hide the ravages of despair beneath a layer of *fard* (make-up). I have a great admiration for the memory of Mazarin; the thing that appeals most to me is his putting on *rouge* on his bed of sickness, which proved to be his death-bed."

One may well doubt whether these words foreshadowed a resolution for the future to Louis Napoleon's mind, but they become interesting in connection with M. Zola's late revelations in *La Débâcle* as to the Emperor having put on *rouge* on the morning of Sedan. But for an author's

selfishness, I should have published that story eighteen months ago.

I have already said that my uncles were very fond of the Emperor, and to the day of their death maintained that he could have given odds to the wittiest French journalist of his time, if not with pen in hand, at any rate in conversation. Making allowance for their partiality, the notes I have by me of some of the Emperor's sallies lend colour to their assertion. Here is one which, until I gave it to a London paper while I was its Paris correspondent, had never appeared in print. One morning shortly after the Emperor's accession, my uncle Joseph—the elder of the two—found him in the brightest of spirits; he was chuckling to himself, a thing of rare occurrence, for, though Louis Napoleon frequently smiled, "his risible nerves seldom left their moorings," to use an expression which, albeit that it came from a medical man, was nevertheless not scientifically accurate. After they had been chatting for a little while, the Emperor said suddenly—"Those priests are very funny now and then."

"Why date, Sire?" replied my uncle, who had read a good deal, and who remembered the *mot* of Mirabeau when some one told him that the National Assembly had been dull that day.

"You are right, they are funny always, when they are not *assommants*," assented the Sovereign,

who did not mind using a popular locution in talking to his friends. "I have been wasting my breath trying to persuade Sibour" (the then Archbishop of Paris, who was stabbed at St. Etienne-du-Mont), "that I cannot remove the tombs of, or rather the monuments to, Jean-Jacques and Voltaire from the Panthéon just to please some of his flock."

"Why do they wish them removed, Sire, seeing that these monuments do not contain a pinch of Rousseau's or Voltaire's ashes?"

"That's just what I have been asking him; but he would not answer the question, nor listen to my argument. He simply kept repeating that 'his flock felt uncomfortable in the presence of these two atheists.'"

"How did you pacify him, Sire?"

"I didn't pacify him at all. I got out of temper myself in the end; and then I exclaimed—'Look you here, Monseigneur, how do you think these two atheists feel in the presence of your believers?' That settled him, and he did not say another word."

Here is another instance of Louis Napoleon's tendency to take a "topsy-turveydom" view of things in general, and of serious things in particular. When public opinion clamoured for the prosecution of the author of *Madame Bovary*, the Emperor consented, though most reluctantly. He was one of the first who had read the book,

and in his inmost heart he admired both the author and his work. "Then why prosecute him, Sire?" asked my uncle Mark. "I'll tell you why," replied the Emperor, smiling. "If we do not prosecute, we shall have every cabman in Paris and in the provinces asking for double his fare the moment an affectionate-looking couple try to step into his vehicle. Flaubert ought to have known better; if it was absolutely necessary to his plot to have Emma Bovary and Léon Dupuis drive round Rouen for a whole day in a conveyance with the blinds down, he ought to have made Léon go to a livery stable for the carriage, and not have made him take a mere hackney from the rank. This *soi-disant*, unmolested drive round and round the city, casts, to begin with, and inferentially, a slur upon the vigilance of the Rouen police, who, stupid as they may be, would not have allowed such a thing to pass unchallenged, and who, to make up for their alleged neglect, will stop every cab that has its blinds down. They have a perfect right to do so in the matter of carriages plying for hire in the public thoroughfares, and we shall have the innocent uncle with his pretty niece, and the somewhat *passée* aunt with her lamb-like nephew, hauled before the magistrate for *outrage aux mœurs*. There is, furthermore, an outcry already that people cannot get into a hackney cab without being fleeced. It is not my fault, after all, that

the spread of education has reached '*cabby*'"—the Emperor liked to use an English word now and then—"and that he has read this masterpiece of realistic fiction. No, Flaubert must be indicted; there will be more scandals if we do not than if we do."

I have often wondered since whether Mr. Gilbert could have produced a more deliberately comical and distorted view of a moral problem.

I need scarcely say that my uncle's notes, from which I extracted the foregoing, were not left open to the inspection of a somewhat precocious lad of thirteen, and that my own "note-book" was not begun until many years afterwards. I would state once for all that these pages are not exclusively personal recollections; still I claim the right to call myself the author of this book, just as the custodian of Madame Récamier's notes claimed to be the author of "Madame Récamier's Recollections." *A bon entendeur salut.* If I can possibly help it, I shall not refer to the subject again, and merely assure the reader that I have more precedents than one for my claim.

During this, my first visit to my grand-uncles, which was intended to last but a few weeks, but which lasted uninterruptedly for over four years, I saw many men and things, of whom and which I have still a most vivid recollection, but most vivid of all is the recollection of the sensation produced by the first glimpse of the Boulevards,

probably because that sensation is practically revived whenever I set foot in Paris. Odd to relate, the delight, if not the awe, at the sight of that magnificent artery, has remained as keen in the man as it was in the boy. It stirs something within me which I am not able to define exactly, but which must be akin to the sensation of the poor old woman I once saw emerge from one of the side streets on to the King's Road at Brighton. "Well, old girl, what do you think of the sea?" asked a young fellow, who was evidently her son. "Think," replied the old dame, after a long pause; "I can't think, Jim; I can only thank God for His having shown me something in my life of which there seems to be enough and to spare." Perhaps the definition of an educated but very unworldly Yorkshireman is better still. I met him on board the steamer, and he asked me to recommend him an hotel. I took him to mine, and brought him by way of the Rue Auber and the Place de l'Opéra on to the Boulevards. It was early in February 1882, and the temperature was as mild as that of a mid-summer's day. We had driven to the hotel by way of the Rue de Lafayette and the Boulevard Haussmann. He had not caught a glimpse of the Boulevards. After dinner I took him out. "What do you think of this?" I asked. He stood for a moment as if transfixed, then he answered—"Cowper said that 'God made the

country; man the town.' The devil made the country-town, and the angels must have made the Boulevards." But on his second visit, which happened about eighteen months later, the delight was not so keen. I merely note this to indicate that my sensation in that respect may be abnormal.

I was not struck to the same degree with the appearance of the troops, albeit that, child as I was, I had heard of their prowess from my father, whom I often accompanied in the daytime to his *café*, where he and his friends closely followed the various incidents of the Crimean War. It was not because these troops were travel-stained, and, as a matter of course, threadbare, not to say ragged, that my childish admiration kept merely "on the simmer, and refused to bubble up." In fact, the four or five regiments of the line, in their patched and worn greatcoats, with their far from bright accoutrements, interested me more than the two or three regiments of the Guards, in their spick and span uniforms, who opened the march. The latter had returned a few months previously, and been provided for afresh. In spite of the magnificent drum-major, the bearded sappers with their white leather aprons, the inspiriting band headed by its "Jingling Jimmy," my boyish mind fell a-criticising the men's physique, and began to compare them to the crowds of disbanded Englishmen—if Englishmen they were—

whom I had seen a few weeks before at Rotterdam. They were the first red-coats I had beheld since I was a very little urchin, and I remember them well now, tall, strapping fellows, who seemed giants. The Frenchmen, in appearance at any rate, were no better than the ordinary Dutch troops, and certainly not as good as the colonial ones whom we frequently saw on their way to the vessels. My scepticism with regard to the real value of the French army if compelled to cope unaided with that of a hardier race, may have taken root at that moment; I am not prepared to say. Certain is it, that during the many years which elapsed between that December day and the army's utter collapse in 1870, I never implicitly believed in its invincibility, and that notwithstanding the gorgeous spectacles I witnessed now and then; notwithstanding the results of the Franco-Austrian War. I should not like to express an opinion as to the results of the next struggle between Germany and France, but I intend at some future period to reproduce some letters I have by me from *un volontaire d'un an*, whose patriotism did not blind him to facts, and from these the reader will be enabled to judge the chances of either party, granting an equal degree of valour and staying power to both sides.

One of the gorgeous spectacles to which I referred just now was the return of the troops from Italy in 1859, on which occasion the Parisians

were treated for the first time to a sight of the Zouaves and Turcos. The latter became even greater favourites with the female population than the former; they were magnificent, stalwart fellows, and for the next fortnight could be seen with some of the prettiest women in Paris hanging fondly on their arms. When the Emperor was told of this, he smiled, and uttered a sentence which has since become proverbial among the French, after Jules Noriac had appropriated it in his *Bêtise Humaine*. "Tous les goûts sont dans la nature." Not long after that he happened to see a set of ebony brushes intended as a birthday present for one of the ladies of the Empress's suite. "A la bonne heure," he said, "le goût du noir se répand; voilà du Turco sur la table de toilette maintenant; quant à moi, en matière d'amour et d'hygiène, je préfère l'ivoire."

In connection with the Zouaves and Turcos, I have before me a note in the handwriting of my younger uncle, which, read by the light of later events, contains a terrible prophecy, and shows once for all the real opinion of Napoleon III., not only with regard to those overrated troops, but with regard to the whole of the French army. The note is dated August 27th, 1859, consequently less than a fortnight after the grandiose spectacle on the Boulevards. It runs as follows:—"Saw the Emperor yesterday, and congratulated him on the magnificent appearance

of the Zouaves and Turcos. To my great surprise, he did not seem to share my enthusiasm. He hung his head and pulled at his moustache. 'Oui,' he said, after a while; 'ce sont, en effet, de très beaux soldats; c'est le levain, peut-être, de l'armée française, mais je n'ai guère besoin de vous dire que le levain qui fermente trop peut gâter toute une fournée. Il faudrait être sûr, absolument sûr, de la nature, de la qualité et du levain et de la pâte avant de les mettre ensemble.'"

This was eleven years before the Franco-German War. As in the case of his comment upon the service Bouffé rendered him, I refrain from attributing to Louis Napoleon the gift of seeing into the future; I simply wish to add this. In 1870 the inhabitants of Nancy, whatever the reaction may have been afterwards, hailed as a relief the advent of the German troops, who delivered them from the Zouaves.

Still in connection with the defeat of Francis Joseph in 1859, I have a note, the substance of which has never been published by the historians, and which, with many other things, must have gone far to justify to Louis Napoleon's own mind his belief in his star. "Louis Napoleon," runs the note in my younger uncle's writing, and dated September 1859, "must have kept a close watch on events in France even during the life of his cousin the Duc de Reichstadt, for about a fortnight ago he showed me a

placard, the existence of which had slipped my memory, though I had seen a similar one on the walls of Paris during the July Revolution (1830). It is a proclamation emanating from some provisional government evidently sitting at the Hotel de Ville, for the bill is dated from there, calling upon the French to raise the son of the great Napoleon to the throne. 'If Francis I. (of Austria) had not been blinded by his jealousy of one grandson, his other grandson would not have been in the plight he is,' said the Emperor, 'for my cousin the Duc de Reichstadt would not have been pledged to revolutionary Italy as I was; and it is more than probable that I should have gone to my grave as a simple prince of the blood. It is by no means an uncomfortable position, that of a prince of the blood, if, as the English have it, "blood be thicker than water," which unfortunately in a good many cases it is not.' This," remarks my uncle, "was a sly allusion to Jerôme and his son. 'The Duc de Reichstadt,' the Emperor went on, 'would have married, he might have had a child, and even if he had died two years later, as he did, I should not have ascended the throne of France; *but it is my opinion*,' this very emphatically, '*that he would have lived to a very ripe old age away from the Austrian Court.*'

"On my remarking," continues the note, "that Francis I. could not have sent a mere lad of nineteen, and such a weak lad too, to Paris on the mere strength of that bit of paper, the Emperor replied—'My cousin was not as weak as you imagine. Besides, there was no need to send him on the mere strength of that bit of paper. Some one had already been sent to fetch him, and that some one was none other than Talleyrand. I am perfectly certain of my facts, for careful inquiry has convinced me that he was absent from Paris for several days.'"

So far the note of my uncle as relating to his conversation with the Emperor. When the *Talleyrand Memoirs* appeared, I looked for some possible clue in confirmation of the Emperor's statement, without much hope of finding it, albeit that long before then I had stumbled upon a paragraph to that effect in a work or pamphlet, the title of which has entirely slipped my memory. I do not think that it was in the *Mémoires de M. de Metternich.* I have an idea that it was in an interesting study of the Duc de Reichstadt, emanating from a French source. I repeat, however, that I considered my search in the *Talleyrand Memoirs* as a forlorn hope, for though I never had the honour of an introduction to M. le Duc de Broglie, I have watched him at work for the last twenty-three years under the

Third Republic, and I know that he would not willingly blacken the memory of Talleyrand needlessly. Still, I feel confident that the Emperor was correctly informed, and that Talleyrand made the attempt to bring the son of the first Napoleon and Marie Louise to Paris during the Revolution of 1830; hence, the younger branch of the Bourbons owes him nothing. Perhaps none was better aware of this than Louis Philippe himself when he called him "*le commissaire-priseur du trône de France.*" When, after his flight to England in February 1848, Louis Philippe was told that the mob had carried that throne to the Place de la Bastille and made a bonfire of it, he said to his informant—"That's the best thing they could have done with it, seeing that Talleyrand is dead, and that he was the only man under whose hammer it would have not only fetched its value —though that is not much—but a fancy price."

To return for a moment to the Emperor. In subsequent years I was enabled to gather from my uncle's conversation that Louis Napoleon felt by no means grateful to the Hapsburgs for the service they had apparently rendered him by "suppressing" his cousin the Duc de Reichstadt; I am quoting his own words. He neither liked nor trusted them, though, of course, the position in which he was placed prevented him from giving vent openly to his dislike, especially after '59, when he had defeated Francis Joseph. He

was fully cognisant of the political mistake he had committed in allowing Austria to be crushed in 1866, but in his inmost heart he rejoiced at Francis Joseph's humiliation.

It is not too much to say that the only members of the family of the great Napoleon who were absolutely loyal to his memory were, besides Madame Laetitia Bonaparte, his two cousins, viz., Louis Napoleon and Princess Mathilde. Lucien was not disloyal—this is all that can be said of him in that respect; but the rest were all more or less indifferent to the man himself, though not to his glory. The Emperor and Princess Mathilde worshipped the memory of the man apart from that of his genius. In their dislike of his enemies they discriminated between Russia, England, Prussia, and Austria, and their respective rulers. That the treatment Napoleon received at St. Helena was never entirely effaced from their minds, may be taken for granted; but Czar Nicholas' generous protection of the Countess Demidoff against her husband, and Queen Victoria's hospitality to Louis Napoleon, had done much to take the edge off their resentment; as for Francis Joseph, they could never be brought to look with any degree of cordiality upon him. They could never forget that he was the grandson of Francis I. of Austria, and above all, the nephew of Marie Louise. The latter's name—to use plain language for once—stank in their nostrils; and during another con-

versation, still on the subject of Talleyrand's ascertained mission to Vienna, the Emperor warmed to his subject, and let out the following: —"My cousin the Duc de Reichstadt was by no means the weakling he has been represented. The deception was a deliberate one on the part of his grandfather, his mother, Metternich, and the whole of the Austrian Court generally, and, I am sorry to say, on the part of an eminent Frenchman too, who, at the outset at any rate, abetted it with his eyes open. I am alluding to Antoine (afterwards Baron) Dubois, the great *accoucheur*, who brought my cousin into the world." Then the Emperor went off, apparently at a tangent. "Have you read Balzac's *Physiologie du Mariage?*" he asked. "You have; well, you recollect that clever chapter on the Family Doctor, in which the author warns husbands against him. Being a medical man yourself, you will be able to appreciate the truth and humour of it better than I can. Of course the woman's wiles described must be as old as the hills, or at any rate contemporaneous with the institution of monogamy among Christians, and Balzac did, after all, nothing more than draw attention to these wiles in his admirable way; but who would have suspected that prim archduchess, who looked and acted as if butter would not melt in her mouth, of having recourse to them in order to get rid of the marital endearments

of a man she disliked? For that was what she undoubtedly did do, and Dubois helped her —I repeat, with his eyes open, for I am loath to believe that so great an authority on those matters as he was could have been unconsciously deceived. And yet, on the plea that Marie Louise's confinement had been a dangerous one, he strictly forbade the Emperor all further cohabitation with the woman who a few years later gave birth to three children within a comparatively short period without the least hurt to her health. It was Dubois who sounded the first alarm with regard to the constitution of the King of Rome. He was bound to a certain extent to do so—at first in order to justify his prohibition. Did he ever find out that he had been beguiled, if beguiled he was? It would be difficult to say; but beguiled or not, he was bound to keep up the fiction that Napoleon's son was a weakling, to save his own reputation. That's how the report first spread; but there was absolutely nothing the matter with my cousin organically. He was as healthy as two out of the three children Marie Louise bore the Count de Neipperg: the first was still-born; the other two are alive, and, barring accidents, likely to live to a hundred."

My uncle having remarked that, after all, a woman could not force her inclinations, the Emperor nodded his head. "I quite agree with

you," he said; "and if Marie Louise had simply and openly refused to cohabit with my uncle after her son was born, I would have admired rather than blamed her. I would have pitied my uncle for the unrequited affection he had conceived for her, but not have considered her bound to requite that affection, seeing the circumstances under which the marriage was contracted. She might have taken her stand on the fact that she had fulfilled the mission for which she had been selected from political considerations, namely, the giving of an heir to the Imperial crown, and that henceforth she had no duties to perform in that respect. That would have been worthy of a woman and of a princess who respects herself, and who resents the fact of having been sold like an Eastern slave both upon the buyer and the seller, though she was powerless to prevent the transaction. But that she should have shown less concern for the glory of a Napoleon than the merest female sutler of one of his regiments; that she should have been less moved by the downfall of such a giant than the merest hind, is a thing I can never forgive nor forget."

"But is your Majesty so very sure that such was the case?" objected my uncle. "In most of the memoirs of the time I seem to have read the contrary."

"Perfectly sure," replied the Emperor. "Every

one of the writers of these memoirs told a deliberate falsehood in that respect, though one is bound to acknowledge, with the most laudable intentions. They themselves were so anxious not to diminish the grandeur of the fallen hero by a single inch, that they hesitated to write the truth on the subject. They argued that the callousness of Marie Louise with regard to the greatest man of his time would breed a reaction in the public mind with regard to that grandeur. Of course, I am alluding to the genuine memoirs, and not to the works of historians. But the fact is that Marie Louise did not shed a tear either in public or in private from the moment she left Paris to that when the abdication of the Emperor and his suspected attempt to commit suicide was communicated to her. It was the Comte de Sainte-Aulaire who undertook to announce the catastrophe to her, and I have the tale from his own lips. I do not think it has ever found its way into print. It was early morning when he reached Blois, and the Empress was still in bed. Nevertheless, he was admitted to her presence, and she rose into a sitting posture, her feet peeping from under the coverlet. There was not a cry nor a word in response to the news, and the bearer, dreading to look up, lest he should be considered indiscreet, face to face with such intense, though silent, grief, kept his eyes fixed on the floor. 'You are looking at my feet, M.

de Sainte-Aulaire,' said Marie Louise, after a long interval; 'I have always been told they are very pretty.' She did not make any further allusion to an event which in a few days was to convulse the whole of the civilised world, which would and did affect the meanest of menials who had come in contact with the greatest captain of all ages. Verily, my uncle was right when he said that 'l'amour est l'occupation de l'homme oisif, la distraction du guerrier, et l'écueil du souverain.'"

This was the woman who fell desperately in love with one of her father's soldiers, Lieutenant-Marshal Count Adam Albert von Neipperg, an honourable, upright, brave, and clever man, but who, compared to Napoleon, was what Mr. Healy is to Daniel O'Connell. When I first came upon the above note in my uncle's papers, I supplemented it by one of my own, without any definite purpose, and merely in obedience to the family craving for notes. It may be found interesting, especially at the present moment, not as a marginal to the Emperor's conversation with my uncle, but as a side-light on M. Victorien Sardou's latest production, *Madame Sans-Gêne*, the main interest of which is evolved from an alleged intrigue between Count Adam and Marie Louise while she was Empress of the French. M. Sardou has not the slightest historical authority for the existence of such an intrigue, nor for

his dramatic situation in the first act which represents Count Adam as taking refuge from the pursuit of the revolutionary mob in the shop of a laundress, afterwards Madame Lefebvre, and finally Duchesse de Dantzic. As far as is known, Count Adam was not in France during the First Revolution, nor did he ever see the Archduchess Marie Louise until 1814. Assiduous student of history as he may be, M. Sardou seems to be ignorant of the way Austrian princesses were, and are to a certain extent still, brought up. In Marie Louise's case, not only were all the supposedly objectionable passages of every book she read bodily cut out, but no male creature was allowed within the apartments occupied by her, and this prohibition applied to the males of the animal world also. True, Marie Louise may have fallen in love with Count Neipperg during the few days previous to her departure for France, but that is highly improbable, and there is no mention of his having been in the suite that accompanied Marie Louise to the Austrian frontier. Furthermore, at the period of Marie Louise's departure for France, Count Neipperg was married, and had three or four children; his wife only died in 1813, two years before the second invasion of France by the allied troops, when the Count was invested with the military command of the Departments of the Gard, the Ardèche, and the Hérault. I would

not argue the fact of Count Neipperg's being a married man as an absolute bar to Marie Louise's sudden passion for him, but the fact constitutes a presumption against it. We may conclude that M. Sardou has drawn entirely upon his imagination. The unvarnished truth seems to be this: Count Neipperg, "the German Bayard" —as Madame de Staël, who knew him personally, called him—was entrusted by Francis I. in 1814 with the task of escorting his daughter back to Vienna. From that moment these two rarely left one another; and when, two years later, Marie Louise assumed the sovereignty of the Duchies of Parma, Placenza, and Guastallas, secured to her by the Treaty of Paris, which was ratified at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, she morganatically married Neipperg, who, until then, had simply borne the title of *chevalier d'honneur*. Count Neipperg had four children by his first wife, three of whom met with a tragic end. Of his two children by Marie Louise, the Contessa San-Vitale is the better known, from the part she played in the Italian revolutionary movement of '48. The son entered the Austrian army with the Italianised patronymic of Montenuovo. Personally, I fail to see how Neipperg can be made into Newmount, unless the Viennese pronunciation is taken into account; but that is a mere detail.

CHAPTER II.

Napoleoniana—Napoleon I. a bad shot—The Emperor at his best when talking about Napoleon I.—Napoleon I. as a patron of the drama—About's *Guillery* and Lemercier's *Christophe Colomb*—Napoleon I. within an ace of becoming a theatrical manager himself—Was Napoleon I. conscious of his future greatness?—Louis Napoleon at Lady Blessington's—He and Charles Dickens have their fortunes told—Roger the great tenor—A curious coincidence—My uncle's opinions about Frenchmen's courage—An anecdote of Alexandre Dumas the elder—The Parisians' love of spectacular display and dramatic sensation—How Napoleon I. provided for it—Napoleon III. an equally good stage-manager, though in a different way—The truth about the famous "Committee of Resistance."

I HAVE already said that my uncles were favourites with Louis Napoleon; I may add that, though they had served under the Prince of Orange (afterwards William II. of Holland) during the campaign of 1815, they shared to the full the idolatry of the third Napoleon for the memory of his uncle, and that this worship, of which I was a constant witness as a child, has not been without its effect upon me in my later life. I have always found it difficult, when writing about France, to keep the head of Napoleon I. out of my memoirs. *Le pli est pris;* but I trust the reader will not grumble in this instance. Nearly all the

following anecdotes are to all intents and purposes new.

Both my relatives were very bad shots; nevertheless, during their annual visits to Fontainebleau and Compiègne they always went shooting with Napoleon III., who, it seems, was a fair marksman. "We must have some muffs among us, just as the Spartans had their drunken helots, as an example to be avoided," said the Emperor, to console them for their frequent discomfiture. "If we had not you, we should have to invite M. Thiers, and the gamekeepers could not scowl at him as they do at you, even if he would come. Besides, you need not fret about it; *the* Emperor (by which he meant his uncle) was even a worse shot than you or your brother are; the only time they put a gun in his hand, he killed a poor hound, and went away thinking he had killed a stag."

Thereupon he told them a story, which, though it has not been mentioned by any of the great captain's biographers, is unquestionably true. "In those days the stag, wherever brought to bay, was left for the Emperor to kill. One day, however, the Emperor was not to be found, and the Master of the Staghounds finished the animal with his knife. Just then the Emperor came in sight. They hurriedly got the dead stag on its legs, propping it up with branches, &c., &c., and handed the Emperor the 'carabine of honour,'

as it was called. The Emperor fired, and, of course, the stag tumbled over, but at the same time there was a piteous whine from one of the hounds, which had been shot through the head. The Emperor, who was on horseback, wheeled round, utterly unconscious of the mischief he had done, saying to one of his aides-de-camp—'Après tout, je ne suis pas aussi mauvais tireur qu'on ne le prétend.'"

Admirable *causeur* as was Napoleon III. when in the mood, he shone brightest on the subject of his famous uncle. There was an almost inexhaustible flow of anecdote *absolutely* unknown to the biographers, and interlarded with quaint comment, mainly tending to show the nephew's ever-predominant wish to tread in the footsteps of the founder of the dynasty—of course, not as a military leader, for Napoleon III., in his wildest moments of ambition, was thoroughly aware of his shortcomings in that respect, but as a social reformer and a patron of art and literature; like his uncle, in his zeal for these latter causes, he often brought about results the very opposite to those aimed at. Frenchmen will brook no interference with their judgments on books, statues, pictures, and plays, albeit these judgments are nearly always influenced by considerations more or less foreign to the true principles of criticism. What they resent most is the supposed or real patronage by "the powers that be" of an author,

painter, sculptor, or composer. Many a clever production has been *positively* hounded off the stage—for the playhouse lends itself most effectually to that kind of cabal—on the mere supposition of such patronage; while, on the other hand, many a work has been lauded to the skies, and hailed with rapture in no way justified by its merits. In the instance to which I wish to allude in particular, various causes had combined to create a prejudicial feeling against the author long before his piece saw the footlights, while the piece itself had not sufficient vitality either to withstand the onslaught of the caballers on the first two nights, or to recover subsequently from the attack. Edmond About was looked upon by all political parties with suspicion, if not with positive antagonism. His polemical writings satisfied no one. They were too literary for the thorough-going politician; they were too political to please the amateur of literature proper, who, too frequently perhaps, has an ill-disguised contempt for the so-called affairs of State. About had alienated the sympathies of the clerical party, and had not succeeded in enlisting those of the Liberals and Republicans. It is not my intention to dwell at length upon About himself or upon his writings; such an attempt would be at variance with the plan, or rather absence of plan, of this book; I am merely noting the state of public opinion with regard to one of the wittiest French writers of the

century at the particular period when he turned his attention to the stage. His first venture in that direction, which took place when I had been but a few months in Paris, ought to have taught him that it is one thing to have a piece accepted *at* the Comédie-Française, and another to have it accepted *in* the Comédie-Française; but it did not teach him. I recollect my younger uncle, who had been to the *première* of *Guillery*, discussing it with his brother next morning at breakfast—I am speaking of the mid-day meal—and telling him of the hisses and cat-calls most of the situations had provoked. Since then I have read the piece, and though by no means insensible to the many clever things it contains, have come to the conclusion that the public were not wrong in attributing its acceptance by the "Reading Committee" of the Comédie-Française to "outside influence," and what, to the public's mind, was worse, to influence from the "Château," as the Tuileries in those days was called.

The Emperor did not altogether deny the impeachment, but he denied being responsible for more than the initial step, and this brings me back to his ever fresh delight of referring to his uncle's doings. "You are right," he said a few days afterwards to my uncle Mark, who gave him some particulars of the disturbances that had occurred on the first night—

the piece only ran for two—"you are right," he repeated; "I ought to follow my uncle's system in such matters to the bitter end, or else not engage in them at all. I cannot imagine how he found time to read plays or to have them read to him; but it is very certain that he did find time, and that he recommended no piece personally unless he had made himself acquainted with it. That's what I ought to have done with *Guillery;* but would you like to know the whole of my share in the transaction? It virtually amounts to this and to no more. I had no need to give About a letter of introduction to Arsène Houssaye, who knows him and his worth better than I do, but it was Fould who beguiled me into it. I know by this time that Fould had an ulterior motive, that there is a woman in the whole of this plot; but I did not know it then. As it was, I only said that I should be pleased to see M. About's play enacted at the Comédie-Française. When handing About the letter, I made use of Louis Philippe's sentence to Victor Hugo when he handed him the pardon of Barbès—'I give you his head, Monsieur; it will be your business to obtain it from my ministers.' Where I have failed, perhaps, is in not saying B when I had said A. My uncle would not have allowed the piece to be hounded off the stage after he had recom-

mended its acceptance. No, as you say, he could not have compelled the public to go and see it, or to applaud it when they did go, but he would have compelled them to sit still and not kick up 'the devil's own delight.' How? I'll tell you. By being present at the first or second performance; more probably at the third or fourth, if there had been signs of systematic opposition at the *première.* The historians of the French stage have given Charles X. credit for saying to Victor Hugo that in matters theatrical he was simply one of the public and no more. My uncle did much better than coin the *mot;* he now and then acted up to it; which Charles X. did not do. Except where he detected a real or fancied political allusion, he judged impartially; and when he found that the play failed to please the spectators, he counselled its withdrawal, however much he liked it himself. But . . . he went to see it. You have heard of Népomucène Lemercier, and you probably know that until the advent of the Empire he was sincerely attached to my uncle. After that they became estranged, though the Emperor never ceased to speak in the highest terms of him. Both were, however, exceedingly obstinate, and neither the one nor the other would take the first step towards a renewal of their friendship. In the heyday of my uncle's glory, Lemercier brought out a play at the Odéon, entitled *Christophe Colomb.* Lemercier, it ap-

pears, had more genius than all the dramatists of the Empire put together, and in this *Christophe Colomb* he made an attempt to break through the iron chain of the three unities of time, place, and action. Odd to relate, the most violent opposition to this innovation came from the students of the Quartier Latin, the predecessors of those who, a score of years later, led the vanguard of the partisans of the elder Dumas and Victor Hugo against the classicists. The Emperor had neither read nor recommended the play; in fact, to be fair, the hostility shown to *Christophe Colomb* was not a protest against the supposed patronage of the sovereign, but the *soi-disant* vindication of a purely arbitrary literary conventionality. Nor need we suppose for a moment that the students were influenced in their attack by the well-known estrangement between the dramatist and the Emperor, which, on the face of it, would afford them a guarantee of non-interference on the latter's part; and from what I have heard of Lemercier, I feel confident that he harboured no such suspicion. But in order to prevent the germ of such a thought sprouting in the public's mind, the Emperor took the matter up after the first night, which had already been fruitful in broken heads and limbs. There was a second performance 'by command;' on which occasion there was a strong display of military and police, who, if anything, aggravated the situation,

for over three hundred students were arrested, the blood flowed freely, and the unmarried among the rioters were ordered to be incorporated in a regiment under marching orders for Germany. 'They had better vent their bellicose ardour on the enemy than on their own countrymen,' said the Emperor; and I am afraid there would have been no appeal from his decision, which spread like wildfire through the capital, and would have been sufficient to strike terror into the boldest, but for the sequel. The Emperor would not give in, and he decided that there should be a third performance, at which he and the Empress would be present. On the night in question, the house, as you may imagine, was crammed from floor to ceiling, while the streets leading to the Odéon were blocked by eager and expectant crowds. The first two acts went off without a hitch; the scene was laid in France, and there had been no opposition to them, for the principle of the unities for which the students battled was not violated. It was the change from *terra firma* to the deck of Columbus' vessel that had aroused their ire. At the opening of the third act the Emperor was seen to straighten himself, while Josephine looked uneasy. Every one knew that the critical moment had come; no one was deceived by the Emperor's apparent attention to the business of the stage; they caught him casting sidelong glances at the

house itself. A deep silence had fallen upon the latter, a silence so intense that, without exaggeration, one might have heard a pin drop. This went on for several minutes, when suddenly there arose upon the air a gentle, soft breathing, as of so many people catching what the English call 'forty winks.' Thereupon the Emperor looked round. The auditorium presented a most curious sight. From the upper galleries to the front benches of the pit, three-fourths of the spectators had donned white nightcaps, with large tassels standing erect; their heads were reclining on their breasts, and they seemed wrapt in peaceful slumber. The Emperor burst out laughing, and Lemercier's play was virtually doomed, though it ran for another eight nights. The rioters of the second night were not drafted into the regiment under marching orders."

I need scarcely remind the reader that the conversations of my grand-uncles with Napoleon III. extended over a period of several years, and that, many of my notes being undated, I am unable to reproduce them in their chronological order; but the following extract is apparently connected with the foregoing, and may have been recorded on the same day. There is, however, no evidence to that effect; it may therefore refer to a subsequent or previous conversation on the same subject.

"Yes," said the Emperor, "my uncle took a

great interest in the theatre even before he made his mark in the world. It is not generally known that he was once within an ace of becoming an *impresario* himself. In 1792 the Italian performers, with the exception of one, left Paris. They did not feel their heads safe on their shoulders, and subsequent events proved that their fears were not altogether groundless. Shortly afterwards, the one who had remained was denounced as suspect—no reason was given for the accusation, nor was there any need in those days, and brought before Fouquier-Tinville. His name was Puppo. 'What was your occupation under the old *régime?*' asked the public prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal. 'I played the violin,' answered Puppo. 'What are you doing at present?' was the next question. 'I am playing the violin,' was the reply. 'What do you intend to do in the future?' 'I intend to play the violin,' said Puppo. 'That seems to me reasonable enough,' growled the prosecutor. 'You are acquitted.'

"Puppo's next would-be employer, who was none other than the celebrated Mlle. Montansier, did, however, not fare so well. She had made a great deal of money, and built a theatre, which she intended to devote to Italian opera, in the Rue de la Loi" (now the Rue de Richelieu). "She was known to have been a favourite of Marie-Antoinette, and Chaumette denounced the

enterprise as an attempt on her part to set the Bibliothèque Nationale on fire. The theatre was closed, and she herself imprisoned for ten months. It was after her liberation that my uncle was introduced to her by Mme. Dugazon, the celebrated actress. He was then a poor lieutenant, without a penny in the world; she was sixty-three, but exceedingly well to do. It appears that he was going to marry her; meanwhile, I feel certain that there was a *liaison* between them. It was Seveste who first told me of this. You remember Seveste, who, in conjunction with his brother, used to run several suburban theatres, and who was the immediate predecessor of Arsène Houssaye at the Comédie-Française. He had the story from his father, who was an actor in Mlle. Montansier's company. As I told you, I had never heard the story before, nor do I think that it was ever known publicly; but I caused inquiries to be made, and I ascertained its perfect truth. It was only then that I understood why my uncle, by the decree of Moscow, had ordered 300,000 francs to be paid to Mlle. Montansier. The money was ostensibly a kind of 'damages' for the loss she had sustained by the closing of her theatre, for which at the time she claimed seven millions of francs, which she did not get; in reality, it was what the English call 'conscience money,' or, better still, 'a compensation for a breach of promise of marriage.'"

"Do I think that my uncle had a presentiment of his future greatness?" said Napoleon on another occasion. "Frankly, I do not think he had when he was merely a poor lieutenant of artillery. I do not think so, and this in spite of the many stories to that effect by my uncles and father. On the face of it, I doubt whether he would have dreamed of marrying a woman old enough to be his grandmother, as was Mlle. Montansier; nay, I doubt whether he would have married Josephine de Beauharnais under the circumstances, and yet, here is a proof that he had some such presentiment; but it was after he had his foot on the first rung of the ladder. I am not certain whether it was the son of Berthier (the son of the first Prince de Neufchâtel et de Wagram) or Saint-Hilaire who told me the story, but it was one of these two, and though either of these two might have printed it, I do not think they did. At that time my uncle was a lieutenant-colonel, and in the habit of visiting General d'Augeranville, who was Berthier's brother-in-law, consequently my informant's uncle. One evening after a dinner-party at which Mme. Tallien was present also, one of the guests proposed to go and have ices at Frascati's, a proposal which was unanimously approved. They started on foot, and their way lay through the Place Vendôme, which at that particular period was a howling wilderness, dark and deserted at night

especially, and, moreover, disfigured by the remains of the statue of Louis XIV., which the revolutionaries had destroyed. When they got to the middle of the square, my uncle stopped and drew his companions' attention to the terrible state of decay around him. 'The square itself is magnificent,' said my uncle; 'but it wants something grandiose in the centre, and promenaders to impart life and bustle to it.' 'Statues have had their day, my dear *commandant;* and if they had not,' replied General d'Augeranville, 'I fail to see whom or what we could put there.' 'I was not exactly thinking of a statue, *mon général,*' mildly protested my uncle. 'What I was thinking of was a column like that of Trajan in Rome, or else an immense sarcophagus that would hold the ashes of the great captains of the Republic.' 'Both ideas are good,' remarked Madame d'Augeranville; 'but I should prefer a column.' 'And we'll have that column one day,' smiled my uncle, 'if they let Berthier and myself have a chance. What say you, Berthier?' he added, turning to the future hero of Wagram. 'What do I say?' answered Berthier; 'I say, that as far as I am concerned, the dream is too splendid to be realised.' As far as I am personally in question," Napoleon III. went on, "people are perfectly correct in crediting me with what they choose to call 'fatalism.' From the moment I began to think for myself, I had an unalterable

conviction that I should rule over France one day; but if I had wavered for an instant in that belief, the Macbethian episode I am going to relate to you would have revived that belief, and for evermore. It happened in London in 1846, shortly after my escape from Ham. One afternoon I was at Lady Blessington's, and talking to my hostess, when the servant brought in a letter, and told her that the bearer, an elegantly dressed young woman, was in the ante-room. I stood aside while Lady Blessington opened the letter, and after having read it, she looked up. 'Do you believe in palmistry?' she asked point-blank. Though I failed to guess the drift of her question, I answered as frankly—'I believe in my own instinct, rather than in the prophecies of fortune-tellers, irrespective of the methods by which they profess to arrive at their predictions; but, after all, it would not be very wonderful if I did believe in such predictions, seeing that my grandmother made a special favourite of Mlle. Lenormand,[1] and my mother, to a certain

[1] Mlle. Lenormand lived for fifty years in the Rue de Tournon, facing the Luxembourg. She was the mistress of Hébert, the Jacobin, the editor of the infamous *Père Duchêne* (the first of the name; the second was edited during the Commune by M. Alphonse Humbert, the late President of the present Paris Municipal Council). Some compromising revelations led to her arrest. During that period it appears she predicted the future grandeur of Josephine de Beauharnais, and when these predictions were realised, became the fashionable fortune-teller. She died in 1843. Among the celebrated personages who attended her funeral was Jules Janin.

extent, was tarred with the same brush. But why do you ask?'

"'I'll tell you,' said Lady Blessington. 'Here is a letter from a friend in Paris, introducing the bearer as one of the most astonishing chiromancers since the days of the woman you just named. In fact, the letter says that she is a pupil of Mlle. Lenormand. What shall we do?'

"Frankly," the Emperor went on, "I did not know what to say. It was, as I have told you, shortly after my escape from Ham, and my aspirations and affairs were pretty well known in the circles I visited; but though there were a great many people who sympathised with both, there were many more who treated me as a rank impostor: politely, but nevertheless as a rank impostor. Especially was this the case with those who were perhaps nearest to the throne, and I need not tell you that the majority of those at the Court took their cue from them. But three years before that there had been a visit of Queen Victoria and her family to Eu, and among the upper and upper middle classes there was a sincere wish to live in amity with the d'Orleans, the head of which house was not only looked upon as a model ruler, but as a model father and husband, which, from an English point of view, was of supreme importance. I doubt whether at that time I gave much promise to the uninitiated of becoming either a model ruler, a model husband, or a

model father. Worse than all, though the principal organs of the press, with the exception of one, left me severely alone, there was every now and then a good deal of tittle-tattle, founded upon truth or the reverse, about me in the smaller papers. I felt that an interview like this with a fortune-teller, if it leaked out—and it was sure to leak out—would be setting people's tongues wagging, and at that particular moment, for reasons of my own, I did not wish to be talked about; and yet, call it superstition, or what you will, I wished to see the pupil of Mlle. Lenormand very much indeed. So I did not know what to say, and kept silent. But a fellow-guest to whom I had been talking when the servant brought the letter, and who had overheard Lady Blessington's question and my reply, came to the rescue. 'Why not test the lady's powers on the spot?' he said. 'On whom?' asked our hostess. 'On the Prince, on me, on any one you like,' he replied.

"In another minute the bearer of the letter was shown into the room. She was young—I should say under thirty—good-looking, well dressed, and her manner betokened the well-bred woman. After a few words my fellow-guest who had spoken stepped forward and held out his hand. 'Is it with regard to your past or your future that you would be informed?' asked the new-comer. 'Oh, I know all about my past; I would like to know about my future,' he

answered, laughing; 'but tell me, Madame, have you ever seen me before?' 'I arrived in London this morning, Monsieur—how could I have seen you before?' saying which, she took hold of his hand and began to examine it very carefully. She was evidently impressed with his good looks, for it was with a sigh of relief that she spoke. 'Your life, Monsieur, will be peaceful, and your death painless; but you'll not live till a very advanced age. One day you and one of your children will escape death by something very little short of a miracle.'

"Then she turned to me, seeing that I was waiting. She examined my hand over and over again, but to our great surprise did not utter a word, and kept looking in turns at our hostess and at us. At last she shook her head. 'It's too absurd, my lady,' she said; 'it's absolutely ridiculous what I am reading in this gentleman's hand; and yet I can read nothing else.'

"'Never mind the absurdity of it,' I remarked. 'Tell us.' 'Well, Monsieur,' she replied, 'I can only answer you by the line of your greatest poet —"Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter;" in other words, Monsieur, your hand tells me that you will reign over a great nation.' The other visitors—there were not many—had gathered around us, and looked somewhat incredulously at Lady Blessington—for I must tell you that she had left the apartment herself in search of the fortune-

teller, instead of asking the servant to show her in. I myself felt shaken in my confidence in my hostess, but she assured me subsequently that she had not exchanged a word with her visitor. The name of my fellow-guest whose fortune was told before mine, will live when mine has been utterly forgotten : it is Charles Dickens. Up till now the miracle that was to save his life and that of one of his children has not happened, and I sincerely trust that the danger predicted to him may be averted whenever it comes; nevertheless, I cannot close my eyes to the fact that in my case the prophecy has proved true."[1]

I may state here that my uncles, in spite of their scientific training, believed in palmistry, in fortune-telling, in spiritualism, and the rest. I am not called upon to give my own views on such matters. I should be sorry to say, though, that I do not believe in them. Anyhow, here is a story which I found among their notes, and which might have justified their belief in things not dreamt of in ordinary people's philosophy. I may remark that the note was fastened with a wafer to that just given, and that it is dated 30th July 1859. It relates to the accident that befell

[1] I need scarcely remind the reader that Dickens was in the terrible railway accident at Staplehurst, and escaped unhurt. On that day he had upon him the MS. of "Our Mutual Friend," one of his offspring—though begotten of his brain. When the accident happened, one of my uncles was dead, and the other dangerously ill ; but I know that the Emperor was terribly affected by it.

the eminent tenor Roger, the "creator" of the title-rôle of Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, a few days previously, which accident cost him his right arm. On the day of the accident (26th or 27th July '59), Roger expected some guests at his country house, several miles distant from Paris; among others the well-known musical critic Fiorentino, and the celebrated prima-donna Mme. Borghi-Mamo, the same who worked herself up to the required pitch by frequent libations of liquorice water and pinches of snuff. On looking at a brace of pheasants which he had shot a few days previously, Roger concluded that they were but "poor things," and decided to go and shoot another brace, from which it would appear that the French *gourmet* of those days did not insist on having his game "high." At a couple of hundred yards from his park gates Roger put down his gun, in order to jump a narrow ditch or a hedge, I do not know which—I should think the latter; for when he got to the other side, his gun was still sufficiently near for him to take hold of it, which, in fact, he did. Unfortunately, he caught hold of it by the barrel; the stock and butt-end got entangled in the under growth; the gun went off, and shattered his right forearm. Five hours later the limb had to be amputated; and Drs. Labordie and Huguet, who had been summoned in hot haste from Paris to perform the operation, told my uncles that while

under the influence of chloroform, Roger sang the romance of Raoul (*Plus blanche que le blanche hermine*) as they had never heard him sing it on the stage.

"It appears," writes my uncle, "that Roger is out of danger. I met Fiorentino yesterday afternoon in the Rue Vivienne. He is absolutely mad with grief; he cries aloud that he is the cause of the accident. Like all Italians, he is terribly superstitious, but this is undoubtedly the most wonderful instance of superstition that has ever come under my notice. We walked as far as the Boulevards together; we sat down at Tortoni's, and there he told me the story. Some years ago when Roger lived in the Rue Rochechouart, he gave a supper, at which, among others, Anicet Bourgeois, Berlioz, and Fiorentino himself were present. Towards three or four in the morning the guests became somewhat noisy, and Fiorentino got up 'to stretch his legs,' as he said. After looking for a while at the pictures on the walls of the dining-room, and especially at a beautiful 'full-length' of Roger, Fiorentino strayed into the next room, which contained a small but interesting collection of fire and side arms, whence he issued in about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, carrying a fowling-piece or some such weapon in his hands. During his absence the fun had grown more fast and furious, and Fiorentino evidently became

infected with it, for he began to handle the gun in the most reckless manner, taking aim at every one in turns, and finally pointing the muzzle at Berlioz. 'I am going to kill Berlioz,' he said; 'Berlioz is a formidable rival; he is in my way as a musical critic. Berlioz, you had better make your will, and appoint me your successor at the *Débats*.' Berlioz, it appears, turned very pale, and shook with fear, though Roger assured him that there was no danger, that the gun was not loaded. Seeing which, Fiorentino changed his aim. 'Berlioz is not worth the killing, at any rate not from my point of view. I should not get his place at the *Débats*, for they would say I had used undue influence. I have got a grudge against the grand opera and against Meyerbeer, for not having given me a bit of his genius, so I'll kill Roger instead; that will stop the receipts at the Rue Le Peletier. Thereupon Fiorentino took aim at his host, who, sure of the gun being unloaded and of his friend's cool head and hand, did not budge an inch. But in another second Fiorentino changed his mind again. 'There is no pleasure in killing Roger; he isn't even afraid of dying. But I must kill something; I'll kill his portrait.' With which he turned the muzzle towards the 'full-length' of Roger, pulled the trigger, and, to everybody's horror, simply riddled the canvas with shot. The most curious part of the story, though, is this. The most terrible

gash in the portrait was in the right forearm, the presentment of the forearm which three days ago was carried to the Hospital Beaujon to show that Drs. Labordie and Huguet had no alternative but to amputate. Fiorentino refuses to be comforted. He says that but for his mad freak of years ago, all this would not have happened; that Roger is reaping the penalty of his (Fiorentino's) tempting of Providence."

Here is another note dated a few days previously, and on an entirely different subject, although it also deals with a prediction to those who will read between the lines.

"The war is at an end, and I for one am glad of it. This joy does not spring absolutely from purely humane motives, though I would not hurt a fellow-creature—and I include animals among my fellow-creatures—if I could help it. But I believe war to be one of the clever devices of nature to get rid of the superfluous population. Proof whereof is, that when science fashions a Jenner to stay the mortality from small-pox by inoculation, nature almost immediately afterwards produces a Napoleon, lest too overcrowded Europe should get still more overcrowded. Hence, it is not a horror of the bloody scenes on the battlefields, nor from a feeling of sympathy with the relatives of those who perish, that I am glad. Of course, I feel for those who sustain such irreparable losses,

still my joy does not spring from a positive hankering after peace. The fact is, that one gets so dreadfully tired of the constant bragging of the French. No one ever denies their courage, so why should they be always thrusting it down people's throats, and by so doing inferentially cast a suspicion on that of other nations? A friend of mine who happened to be at Marseilles when some of the troops took ship there, told me that all the while there was the cry—'Eh, Messieurs les voyageurs, prenez vos billets pour l'Autriche.' After all, the Quadrilateral is a good distance from Vienna. Then there are illustrations which make one's gorge rise. I saw one the other day, in which a *chasseur de Vincennes* was seated on the ground, calmly smoking his pipe. Before him were two Austrian grenadiers, not attacking, but ready to repel an attack. Text: One Austrian grenadier to the other—'Eh bien, il ne nous attaquera donc pas, ce petit Francais?' The chasseur de Vincennes—'J'attends que vous soyez six.' If ever the hour of defeat sounds again for France, which I trust will not happen during my lifetime, all this will be remembered against her; of that I feel certain. And yet that same overweening confidence—I will not call it by a harsher name—when displayed by others, provokes their ire to a degree; they have no words sufficiently contemptuous to stig-

matise such *outrecuidance.* It appears that the authorities at Turin seized five or six letters with the Vienna postmark, and addressed to Austrian officers, '*Bureau restant*, Turin.' The writers of these letters took the triumphal entry of the Austrians into the capital of Piedmont for granted; the difference between the writers, and the French troops shouting—'Messieurs les voyageurs, prenez vos billets pour l'Autriche,' was, all things considered, not so very great; but to listen to the French, the thing was too monstrously ridiculous and despicable."[1]

"According to the official bulletins, the losses on the Austrian side were invariably terrible, while the French casualties were scarcely worth mentioning. Even Alexandre Dumas, who, Heaven knows, can be Chauvinistic enough, put his back up against this constant and systematic perversion of the truth. But, of course, it was done in his own inimitable way. The other night when he was sitting at Tortoni's, the news of the victory at Montebello had just reached Paris. Dumas' face looked very grave, while every one else's was beaming with satisfaction and delight. At last they asked him the reason of his seeming depression. 'Well,' he said slowly, 'it is quite true I feel sadly grieved, and that notwithstanding our

[1] On the evening of Mars-la-Tour, some of the German generals spent "a most comfortable night" in a French country house, and on inquiry found that Bazaine had sent word to have it prepared for him.

victory, or rather because of our victory, for I am concerned about the 400 or 500 of our countrymen that are gone and standing at the gates of Heaven without the remotest chance of being admitted. I am not very religious myself, but I fancy that when a man goes all the way up to Heaven, he does not care to have the gates shut in his face, and that's what Peter is doing to them.' We all knew that something good was coming, and humoured him. 'Do you mean the 400 or 500 men that fell at Montebello?' asked some one. 'I mean 400 or 500 of those that have fallen,' was the answer, 'for that Peter is an obstinate brute.' We looked puzzled, seeing which Dumas explained — 'You see, I am, as you are aware, in communication with the spirits' (Dumas had pretensions that way), 'and I have just received the news that there are tremendous rows. Peter got the official bulletin which mentions 400 or 500; it happens that there are more than 1000, and he is treating the rest as rank impostors, shouting that they have donned the French uniform in order to impose upon him; and he swears he's not going to stand it. That's why I am so sad.' With which he got up and recited La Fontaine's fable 'Le Lion abattu par l'Homme.'

"'L'ouvrier vous a déçus;
Il avait liberté de feindre;
Avec plus de raison nous aurions le dessus,
Si mes confrères savaient peindre.'

"This was a sly allusion to the various sketches from the battlefields that were already reaching us, and in which the Austrians never seemed to have 'the ghost of a chance.' It was especially a kind of witty protest against the Ministry of War which had tacitly invited this one-sided delineation of events by the despatch to the Quadrilateral of a staff of young artists with the high-sounding title of 'Painters to the Ministry of War.' I happened to see one of these, M. Armand Dumaresq, at the moment of his departure; he wore a uniform specially designed for the staff: dark blue tunic, light blue trousers, and —a sword by his side. It stands to reason that no impartial accounts could come from such a source."

I have an idea that my uncle was not merely satisfied with consigning these thoughts to paper, but mentioned them to the Emperor. I cannot say for certain at what period, but it was probably after the Emperor's return from Italy, perhaps when he congratulated him on the appearance of the Zouaves and Turcos. At any rate, the note transcribed below appears to me to contain an allusion to some such conversation.

"'Take it for granted,' said the Emperor, the other morning, while we were talking about the craving for spectacular display and dramatic surprises of the Parisians; 'take it for granted that Napoleon I. knew the idiosyncrasies of the Pari-

sians in that respect better than any ruler who has come after him, and perhaps better than any ruler that went before. He has been accused of pandering to these idiosyncrasies; he probably did, and he was wise in his generation. The news of an important victory was never published to the Parisians until rumours of a serious defeat had been circulated beforehand. Of course, the sudden change from grief to joy produced a startling effect, but you must remember that with regard to the transmission of news, we are living under entirely different conditions. In the smallest campaign we have the correspondents of the foreign papers on every side of us, not to mention the correspondents of our own press, who are scarcely more discreet than the rest. No, decidedly, Napoleon I. was better off in that respect than any of his successors, including his nephew. It has often been said that he was a great actor, or, at any rate, a stage-manager of genius. Great as he may have been, I fancy that as a stage-manager I am as great as he; for there are a good many political dramas—or, if you like it better, comedies—enacted, in which the wires which set the puppets in motion are not only *absolutely* invisible to the public, but the identity of the wire-puller a profound secret. I know I may trust you implicitly, so I will tell you a story. Have you ever noticed on the walls of Paris the bills of that famous 'Committee of Resistance,'

the guiding spirits of which have succeeded in baffling all the researches of the police for the last ten or eleven years, for if I remember aright, it began to exhibit its manifestos and warnings and threats almost immediately after the June disturbances during the Second Republic?'

"I nodded assent, for I remembered very well; in fact, it would have been difficult not to remember; for from the moment of its birth the 'Committee' was bent upon reminding us of its existence, at every hour of the day, and, for that matter, at every hour of the night. It sounded its first cry while Paris was still reeking with the blood shed during those two terrible days in June 1849, and henceforward, at every shock, at every crisis, its concisely worded bills appear on the walls of the capital. The 'Committee' jeers and flouts at Lamartine; it withers Cavaignac with its contempt; after the review at Satory, it holds the Prince-President up to ridicule; it endeavours to strangle the Empire 'in the making,' and when it finally comes into the world, the 'Committee' worries and harasses it at every turn and twist with bills scarcely larger than the size of one's hand, but which, nevertheless, do their work, for not a day goes by but what the *Constitutionnel* and the *Patrie*, and other Conservative papers, draw attention to 'another manifesto,' and besiege the Prefecture of Police with so-called clues to the whereabouts of the 'Committee's' head-

quarters. But it is all in vain: this powerful police, powerful in spite of its many shortcomings, has not succeeded in laying hands once in nearly twelve years on one of the members of the 'Committee,' let alone its chief.

"I remembered all this, so I nodded assent. 'Well,' remarked the Emperor, 'what if I were to tell you that this dreaded "Committee" has virtually no existence, save in the imagination of one individual, or, to be positively accurate, that the whole of that Committee consists of that one individual?' I must have looked very incredulous, for the Emperor went on immediately—'I see you doubt my word, but what I am telling you is a fact, nevertheless. If you want a better proof, go and see Fleury as you leave here; you are sure to find him at this hour in the Cour de Caulaincourt (the Imperial stables), and ask him about the "Committee of Resistance." You may tell him that I give him leave to speak. But you may take my word for it. I am telling you the absolute truth. The man's name is Préaut de Morand—but of the affix I am not sure. He lives in the Grande Rue des Batignolles; he has been a journalist or a printer in the south—I believe a printer; for though the handbills which set Paris a-wondering every now and then, and are supposed to terrify me out of my wits, are produced with my money, I do not know who prints them; nor does Fleury, of whose identity

Préaut pretends to be ignorant, though I have my doubts about that also.'

"'With your money?' I said.

"'With my money,' replied the Emperor. 'I will tell you how it happened. You know that Fleury, according to his own account, is an early riser; according to that of others, he simply goes to bed very late. The Bible says—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Fleury, though he never boasts about anything, mistakes the taking off of his harness for the girding of it on. Anyhow, one morning in the summer of '53, he was sitting at the window of a house in the Faubourg Poissonnière, opposite the Conservatoire, just at daybreak. He had his harness on —how long he had had it on we'll not inquire, though he was far enough from home; he was, then, sitting at that window, just about daybreak, when he noticed a man and a woman sticking little handbills on the walls of the Conservatoire. He did not say a word, but went into the street, and for more than two hours dogged the footsteps of the couple, who continued to stick bills wherever they could, and when there was no *sergent-de-ville* in sight. He dogged them till they got home. He did not watch them himself afterwards, but had them watched for more than a fortnight without telling the man whom he employed the reason of that surveillance. Then he

bearded the couple in their own den; he felt perfectly certain by that time that the whole of the so-called "Committee of Resistance" consisted of Préaut and his wife. Fleury pretended that he and his relations had suffered at my hands, or, at any rate, at the hands of my "creatures," and he has supplied Préaut with money ever since. Why did I leave Préaut unmolested? For a very good reason. If I had him arrested and tried, he would get a twelvemonth's, at the most two years' imprisonment, and be a hero and a martyr for ever afterwards. At the elections following his release he would become a deputy. At his trial he would assume a defiant attitude, preserve a stubborn silence, not because he had anything of importance to reveal, but in order to impress the country with the idea of his magnanimity in not divulging the names of his fellow-conspirators, and so forth. Then there is another thing. This very Préaut serves me as a sword of Damocles, which I hold suspended over any and every important official of the Prefecture of Police, from the Prefect himself downward. The moment any of these show a tendency to become "skittish," I throw the failure of discovering the "Committee of Resistance" in his face. It has generally the effect of "shutting him up." There is a third consideration which makes me "lie low." Préaut would either preserve a stubborn silence, or else "blab" out all

he knows. In the latter case, it would not be difficult to identify Fleury, mind, one of the most devoted friends of the Emperor himself, and the Emperor would be charged with having taken the rôle of *agent provocateur* out of the hands of the police, to assume it himself. No, things are better as they are, and the little money Préaut costs me is well spent.'"

Thus far my uncle's note, which, like all the others in my possession, I never saw until the death of both brothers. I may be permitted to add a short one of my own in connection with this particular story. Frequently during our strolls in Paris, when I had reached years of discrimination, we came upon the handbills of the "Committee of Resistance," and as frequently I used to remark upon the shortcomings of the police with regard to them. These remarks were invariably received by both my relatives with a silent smile. They never hinted that they were the custodians (in common with Fleury and the Emperor) of a secret in connection with those threatening scraps of print. Something else. Up to this day, when the Empire is stark dead, when pretty well everything concerning it has been told, when those who profess to have been instrumental in overthrowing it have received their rewards, no one has ever come forward as an erstwhile member of the "Committee of Resistance," though even now it is alluded to at

rare intervals by the ultra-Republican papers as "that powerful organisation *which effectually kept in check the man of the 2nd December*, and prevented the spirits of the true friends of liberty from falling below the freezing-point." Can you refrain from laughter, friends?

CHAPTER III.

Some notes on Victor Emmanuel—His portrait in later years—The sculptor Marochetti's opinion of Victor Emmanuel's physical appearance—A note of my younger grand-uncle—Victor Emmanuel's dislike of politics and *finesse*—A reception at the Tuileries—Victor Emmanuel and Napoleon III.—Victor Emmanuel as a *raconteur*—Massimo d'Azeglio's stories of Victor Emmanuel—His estimate of the man and of the King—Victor Emmanuel's idea of accomplishing the unification of Italy—His dislike of etiquette and restraint—A hunting-story—Victor Emmanuel at La Mandria—Rosina Vercellana, afterwards Contessa di Mirafiori; Victor Emmanuel's morganatic wife—Victor Emmanuel's appetite—The story of his hair-dye and "make-up"—Contessa Rosina and the King at home—Contessa Rosina wants to dye her hair also—Contessa Rosina's temper—Napoleon III. on morganatic wives.

I HAVE by me some notes which, though not dated, were evidently written in the middle of the fifties, during (or perhaps after) the visit of Victor Emmanuel to the Emperor. They do not relate to political questions, albeit that the name of Massimo d'Azeglio crops up in them once or twice. It is well known that the son-in-law of Manzoni accompanied Victor Emmanuel during his voyage. Nor can I state positively whether any of the conversations recorded in these notes were held exclusively with the painter of "Orlando Furioso." I am under the impression, however, that the notes are the result of conversations

with Napoleon III., but that some remarks of the painter-author and statesman in one to my younger grand-uncle led to these conversations. My uncles, I fancy, had no idea that these notes would ever prove useful to their nephew, who, to say the least, gave no promise at that time of embracing either journalism or literature as a profession. They scribbled for their own amusement, just as I did at first, hence the still chaotic state of these documents.

I saw Victor Emmanuel three or four times during a short journey to Italy two years before the outbreak of the Franco-German War. His portraits and the accounts of those who had been very close to him had prepared me for the sight of a very ugly man, not to say a facial deformity. Well, I frankly confess that I did not think him ugly at all. I could name straight off a half-dozen eminent men whom I have known, who were distinctly uglier than he. The great drawback to his appearance was his corpulence and shortness of stature, and both these disappeared to a great extent when he was in uniform and on horseback. I never saw him in *mufti* or on foot, and that may explain my disagreement with the general opinion, though I do not stand alone in that disagreement. When the great sculptor Marochetti had finished the statue of Victor Emmanuel's father, Charles Albert, he openly said that he would have preferred carving that

of the son; then added—"He is certainly not handsome, our sovereign; but with him as a model, I could have produced a striking, original work, for there is something picturesque, nay, savage and barbaric about him which would lend itself to a grandiose conception. In marble or bronze he would look like a chief of the Huns, a leader of barbarians. Put him on horseback, and his appearance will favourably compare with that of any prince or sovereign in Europe, not excepting the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs."

My younger uncle had virtually arrived at the same conclusion several years before. "I saw Victor Emmanuel riding by the side of the Emperor," he wrote in one of the notes referred to above, "and plain as he may be in the conventional acceptation of the term, I could not help being struck by the face. I have never seen the like among the better classes, let alone among the members of the royal houses; and yet he did not appear a bit out of place amidst the brilliant *cortège* around him; on the contrary, in spite of his short stature, he seemed to tower above them all, although there were some positive giants among them—Russian and German princes, I was told. The blue eyes, the fierce moustache, but, above all, that matchless, I might say phenomenal nose, impart an air of determination and obstinate daring which it is difficult to

describe. I cannot say what the future may have in store for Victor Emmanuel and Italy; but of one thing I feel certain—if that future has to be shaped by diplomacy alone, and if that diplomacy has to be shaped by the son of Charles Albert, there will be no united Italy in his lifetime, for, on the face of it, he has not got an ounce of *finesse* in him. Ferrari[1] told me yesterday that they have the greatest difficulty in making him discuss a political question. The other night, however, d'Azeglio and some others of the King's suite were rubbing their hands with great glee. For nearly an hour the King was engaged in an apparently serious conversation with the Emperor; both monarchs were evidently very pleased with one another, especially the Emperor, who, though he often smiles, rarely laughs. He was, however, heard to laugh outright twice or three times during that hour. Of course, every one stood respectfully aside, so that not a word of the conversation was overheard; nevertheless, the Italians were delighted, for they felt certain that Victor Emmanuel was gradually becoming alive to the necessity of being a diplomatist as well as a soldier and sovereign. While we were talking,

[1] Joseph Ferrari was an Italian by birth, but spent the greater part of his time in France. He was, and is still considered, one of the greatest authorities on the history of "Revolutionary Italy," but his book best known in France is *Philosophes Salariés*. He died in Rome in 1876.

Ferrari and I, strolling up and down in front of Tortoni's, my brother came up; he was beaming all over his face, and chuckling to himself, as is his habit when pleased. I had not seen him since the early morning; it had been my turn to attend to our gratuitous *clientèle*, and I knew that he intended to go to the Tuileries to request a favour of the Emperor for one of our *protégés*. 'Did the Emperor promise you the place?' I asked him the moment he joined us. 'Yes,' was the answer; 'I might have asked for anything I liked, for I never saw the Emperor so pleased as he was this morning. The whole of the transaction was settled in about five minutes, but I remained for more than two hours, during which the Emperor told me about a dozen of the funniest, but at the same time spiciest garrison and hunting stories I have ever heard. They all come from Victor Emmanuel, who, it appears, entertained him with them for an hour or more the other night, at the grand reception at the Tuileries. "But the best of it was," said the Emperor, "that all the while his Majesty's aides-de-camp and sundry chamberlains stood at a distance looking as grave as owls, and taking it for granted that we were settling the map of Europe."' I looked at Ferrari, and Ferrari looked at me, but he walked away without saying a word."

"Ferrari," says another note which is obviously

a sequel to the last, "did not get over his disappointment for at least forty-eight hours. I met him this morning in company with d'Azeglio, to whom he introduced me. Ferrari had told him my brother's story, and almost as a matter of course, the conversation turned on the subject of Victor Emmanuel's dislike of all restraint and etiquette. 'He feels cramped and cabined at Court, even at his own,' remarked d'Azeglio. 'I do not mean to say that he despises the arts and refinements of our epoch, but he feels a kind of pity for them. If he could have his way, the question of a united Italy would be settled in a day, without the aid of diplomacy, or without the aid of armies for that matter. He would simply challenge every sovereign whom he considers an obstacle to the realisation of that idea, to single combat, Francis Joseph included. But he would hold his hand at Pius, even if Pius were as young and as vigorous as he, Victor Emmanuel, is. Some of us call this feeling of moral fear—for I need not tell you that physical fear has no place in his heart—superstition; others call it religion. Whatever it be, it will be productive of curious results in the final attempts to create a united Italy. We may live to see this, and then you'll remember my words.[1] Such armies as the Holy Father, whether it be Pius or his successor, will be

[1] Massimo d'Azeglio did not live to see this. He died in 1866.

able to call to his aid will not avail in the least finally, even if they succeed in checking Victor Emmanuel's advance at first; but I'll tell you what would stop him, provided he himself headed his own troops—the Pope himself, in full pontificals, the triple tiara on his head, the ring of St. Peter on his finger, and the cross in his outstretched hand. Practically, I am a more fervent Catholic, though perhaps not a more fervent Liberal, than the King, and I doubt whether such an appearance would make me recoil one single step; but it would have that effect upon Victor Emmanuel. In short, the King is, in my opinion, a phenomenon, for in spite of his illustrious origin, in spite of the advantages of education and surroundings, he is not only a stranger to all refinement, but it is throughout irksome to him. He does things for which it is almost logically impossible to account, and not out of mere affectation, but simply because his nature prompts him to do them. Here is one among many. A couple of years ago, during a shooting expedition round about the *Col di Tende*, he and an intimate friend, having come considerably out of the way, were obliged to take shelter for the night in a poor peasant's hut, and what was worse, perhaps, in a poor peasant's hut the occupants of which as well as the hut were the reverse of clean or savoury. After their frugal supper, they gathered round the log fire, and

whether it was the effect of the heat or something else, the friend, who was by no means squeamish, averted his face from their host, and persistently kept it averted until the King himself could not help noticing it. 'What's the matter?' he asked in a low voice. 'Nothing much,' was the answer in the same tone; 'only this man smells like a wild beast in his den.' 'Is that all,' laughed the King; 'so should we if we didn't wash for a week.' 'Never to that extent, your Majesty.' 'That's what you think? Well, I'll make you a bet on it; I'll try.' The King was as good as his word; or, at any rate, he conscientiously endeavoured to win his wager. But at the end of the fifth day his friend respectfully put his arm on his. 'Your Majesty has won the wager, not at the end of the week, but in two days less.' Victor Emmanuel burst out laughing; nevertheless, according to the loser of the wager, 'he did not hurry to part with the trophies of his victory.'

"'This is almost of a piece with what he does at La Mandria,'[1] continued d'Azeglio. 'Seeing that the walls with which he chose to enclose the demesne cost close upon a million of lire, I need not tell you that there was sufficient room to have built a comfortable dwelling-house away from the stables, cow-houses, and the rest, even if he

[1] La Mandria, situated at about four miles from Turin, was Victor Emmanuel's favourite residence, and was built by him for Rosina Vercellana, afterwards Contessa di Mirafiori.

wanted to indulge his dislike to staircases. He might have erected a dozen, nay a score, of one-storied houses. But, for no earthly reason whatever, he built a two-storied house, that is, a ground floor and a story atop of it, and lodged all his animals — a perfect menagerie, apart from the cows, horses, pigs, and poultry—on the ground floor, so that there is absolutely not a single living room into which the pungent smell from below does not penetrate. He maintains that it is the best soporific in the world. I pledge you my word that a soporific is the last thing he wants, as his officers sleeping in the apartment next to him know to their cost. Luckily, he is a very early riser, and does not mind in the least being left to tramp about the farm by himself, or, for that matter, going out alone either in town or country. As for the place itself, part of it looks like a fourth or fifth rate zoological garden, and a badly-kept zoological garden, while the land, except in a few rare spots, is very poor. There are over 5000 hectares of it. The interior, with the exception of one room, is simply a model of discomfort to any one with the most elementary notions of comfort. Faded curtains; very few carpets, and these all threadbare; rickety furniture. Save the chairs and tables, the former of which are uncompromisingly hard, there is not an article that would not be contemptuously rejected by the poorest country gentleman, and

that means something, seeing that in our outlying districts and provincial towns we are not at all fastidious in those matters. And when one comes to the exceptional room in the house, the Contessa Rosina's drawing-room, one is inclined to envy the poverty of the remainder. To find the counterpart of that room in Paris, you would have to go to one of the large *cafés* on the outer Boulevards just after it has been 'redecorated;' large masses of gilding and looking-glasses everywhere, and the furniture in keeping with the whole. As for the Contessa di Mirafiori herself—I am giving her her new title, though I am confident that the people will never call her anything but Rosina—she is a good creature, provided you know how to manage her, which at times is by no means an easy task, just because at the first blush it seems easy. She has neither the ambition nor the intellect of a Maintenon, a Pompadour, or even of a Du Barry. Her affection for Victor Emmanuel does not even spring from the causes that fascinated La Vallière. Unlike La Vallière, she does not love the King because he is, in her opinion, the most brilliant among a brilliant throng; for, in truth, the King is not very brilliant, nor his throng; she simply loves him as the strong, healthy peasant lass loves the robust, vigorous peasant lad; she would have loved him if he had been no more than one of her father's fellow-

soldiers—instead of being the first in the land—for Vercellana was only a trooper in the King's Bodyguard—a company like the Emperor's Cent Gardes—though he is an officer now. Rosina is as proud of her bodily strength as is the King, and seldom misses an opportunity of showing it. Here is an instance of such an exhibition, which, let me add, was contrived for a double purpose, showing that Rosina, though not possessed of a high order of intellect, can be very crafty when it suits her. About a twelvemonth ago a very intimate and sincere friend of Victor Emmanuel felt convinced that Rosina had done him a bad turn, and slightly poisoned the King's mind against him. He felt determined not to sit down tamely under such injustice—to go and see the King and ask for an explanation. The King was in *villégiatura*, and had just sat down to breakfast with Rosina when the visitor was announced. I ought to tell you that the latter is one of the most splendid, stalwart creatures you would meet anywhere; he is reputed to be the handsomest and strongest man in Piedmont. The moment he entered the room, Rosina knew what he had come for; so without giving him time to say a word, she got up, apparently overjoyed to see him, and flung herself with all her might on his breast. Taken unawares, he, of course, staggered for a moment under this vigorous welcome; thereupon Rosina,

beaming with delight, turned round, saying—"You see, Victor, you thought your friend very strong; well, I nearly threw him down." The King laughed, his friend could but follow suit, and the danger of an explanation was averted—at least for that day.

"'In spite of his *embonpoint*,' d'Azeglio went on, 'the King is not only very strong, but likes to appear stronger than he is. He has an almost undisguised contempt for weaklings; "carpet-knights" he positively abhors, and he frequently inveighs about their "pomatums and cosmetics." And yet he is not above using "make-up" himself, though not "for the sake of looking pretty," as he styles their attempts. Truly, no such wish influences him—quite the contrary. It is not generally known that originally the King's hair and moustache were fair. But on the morning of the battle of Novara he discovered that he did not look fierce enough. He would there and then have changed his "milksop's appearance," as he called it, but, as you may imagine, the materials to that effect were not at hand. Certain it is, however, that a few days later not only his hair and moustache had become darker, but the face was considerably tanned and sprinkled with brown spots, the result of the unskilful application of the dye. Since then he has grown somewhat more deft; but at the best of times he is not very clever at "faking," and as he hates

barbers or valets to come near him, he often presents a comical sight, especially when he has been away from Rosina for a week or so, for when he is with her she attends to the operation. I really believe that it is about the only artifice of which Victor Emmanuel has ever been guilty. But now comes the funnier part of the story. Rosina also took a fancy to dyeing her hair. One of the officers in attendance upon His Majesty told her of the women of Titian, and of the particular hue of their tresses, and went as far as to get the necessary chemicals for Rosina. When the King heard of this he flew into a towering rage, and Rosina was obliged to leave her really beautiful hair alone. I feel almost certain that it was the only disagreement they ever had, for they are really very united and fond of one another, and in this instance the close bond springs not from a dissimilarity of tastes and disposition, but from a similarity. The conventionalities and restraints of "good society" are as irksome to her as to him. From the story of her flinging herself upon the neck of the visitor, in order to avoid an explanation, you may gather that she is not devoid of tact of a certain kind. She has the sense to know that she would be at a disadvantage among women of birth and education, whom, to her credit be it said, she never tries to ape in manners or speech, and so she avoids coming in contact with them. She is fond of

the theatre, and when in Turin, goes very frequently; but the higher form of the drama, and even the opera, does not appeal to her; she likes a stirring melodrama or a roaring farce, by preference, with light, catchy tunes in it; and though she always occupies a box, she never wears evening dress. In fact, to look at her, you might take her for a rich tradesman's wife with a taste for showy bonnets, loud colours, and glittering diamonds. It is in the exhibition of the latter that she is most often at fault; for, even when in walking costume, she is absolutely smothered in them. Like the majority of the women of the class whence she sprang, "she dresses to go out;" at home, and especially at La Mandria, she is somewhat careless, though not untidy in her attire. Like the "daughters of the people," she wears by preference the *camisola*, and a kirtle reaching to her ankles; and it is rather curious to see the royal lover—the King of united Italy that is to be—and his favourite seated at breakfast. Her *camisola* is matched by his unbuttoned shirt. As often as not, there is not even a cloth on the table; the salt lies in a heap by the King's plate; he invariably empties the salt-cellar in that way, because it worries him to have to dip his spring onions, of which he eats a great quantity, and raw, into the salt-cellar. You look in vain for the bones on their plates; if there be any of the former at all,

they will be found on the floor, where the two or three dogs that are nearly always in the room have left them after having had their fill. Rosina is a fair trencher-woman, though, in comparison to Victor Emmanuel's, her appetite may be said to be delicate, for the latter's is almost phenomenal. Unlike most Italians, he eats a great deal of meat, though he by no means despises vegetables. A little while ago he was on a shooting expedition in his favourite region about the *Col di Tende*, and, as usual, they halted at a farmer's house for supper. I am told that the hosts on such occasions are invariably left in ignorance of the high position of their guest, but I have my doubts about the statement. Neither the King's appearance nor his face is likely to remain unnoticed in a crowd, let alone in an unfrequented or little-frequented spot. Be this as it may, the supper on that occasion consisted of an enormous dish of veal cutlets. Towards the end of the meal, the King, whose plate was absolutely empty, seeing that he had given all his bones to the dogs, asked his nearest neighbour to guess the number of cutlets he, the King, had eaten. The officer, out of deference, perhaps, to his royal companion, answered that, though he had noticed the King "being very busy," he had paid no particular attention to the number of cutlets that had disappeared. "I should say three," he suggested modestly. Victor Emmanuel

shook his head, and repeated the question to every one around. But they were all evidently determined not to overstep the first estimate of the King's appetite, until a Savoyard gentleman, an intimate friend of the sovereign, and as outspoken as he, settled the matter by saying that he had seen Victor Emmanuel help himself nine times. 'That's quite right,' laughed the King; 'I've eaten nine cutlets.' These are the stories," concluded d'Azeglio, "with which he entertains Rosina; for Rosina has to be entertained, not to say conciliated, especially after a week or a fortnight's absence. She is absolutely incapable of fathoming the grandeur of the task in which Victor Emmanuel is engaged. Nay, more; if ever she expresses an opinion on that task, which, truth to tell, is very seldom, it is to the effect that 'Victor would do better to look after his own, after what he's got,' as she puts it, and that the revenues of Piedmont are quite sufficient for his purpose and his wants, 'which, after all, are very small,' for she has no idea that the revenues of Piedmont *are not* the King's to do with just as he pleases. In reality, apart from her utter inability to understand these matters, she is very jealous of the King's every look and movement when away from her, and not without cause, though, whatever infidelities Victor Emmanuel may commit, he always returns to La Mandria with renewed zest. During one of those absences lately, while he was

presiding at a Council, there came a mounted messenger from La Mandria asking him to come back immediately. Of course, he could not leave like that, at a moment's notice, and he sent an answer in that sense. In a little over an hour the messenger returned with a second note, which this time he showed to his ministers, saying 'Rosina wants to see me. I must go, for she threatens to fling her son out of the window if I don't go. I know her, and she would be as good as her word.' At present Rosina has only two children; but she is not above twenty-three, and before the end there may be a dozen. It will not matter much to the King; on the contrary, I believe he would be very pleased, for he is exceedingly proud of these two, prouder, in fact, than of his legitimate offspring, with whom he is always comparing them in point of health and strength, to the disadvantage of the latter, and somewhat unjustly, for I think the others are quite as vigorous and good-looking."

So far that particular note of my uncle, to which I have not been able to find a sequel, relating directly to "*la bella del Ré.*" I have, however, by me some personal notes, resulting from conversations with Ferrari and others, and which, though not so amusing from an anecdotical point of view, are perhaps quite as interesting from a historical. If possible, I will give them at some future time. Meanwhile, it would appear that

my uncle told the Emperor a few days afterwards about the scene on the Boulevards, and the disappointment of Ferrari, and incidentally repeated part of d'Azeglio's remarks about Victor Emmanuel's attachment to Rosina Vercellana. The Emperor seemed very much interested, nodded his head significantly several times, and finally gave his own personal and private opinion. "Up till now," he said, "there is not much harm done, and provided he does not contract a morganatic marriage with her, there will be no harm done. I need scarcely tell you that the greatest mistake Louis XIV. ever committed was to marry Mme. de Maintenon, and though the Comtesse de Mirafiori has probably not a tithe of widow Scarron's brain or ambition, that kind of union is always a dangerous experiment."

CHAPTER IV.

A chapter on the Comédie-Française—My reasons for writing it—A country has the drama and theatrical institutions it deserves—*Causerie*, not history—My first glimpse of the late Augustine Brohan—Few of those whom I saw in my youth remain—Edmond Got—Got and Emile Augier—The genesis of *Les Fourchambault*—Theatrical Paris in 1861—*Les Effrontés*—Louis Veuillot and Emile Augier—Got's preparation for playing Bernard—Got's preparations for playing Rabbi David Sichel—Got and M. Isidore, the late Chief Rabbin of France—Proposed epitaph for Parade—Got's extensive reading—Got and Mounet-Sully—Mounet-Sully as an actor—"A ladder for M. Mounet-Sully"—Got and Raoul Rigault of the Commune—The *mise en scène* of the Comédie-Française—A retrospective view—The late M. Emile Perrin and some other administrators of the Comédie-Française—A curious official mistake—MM. Erckmann-Chatrian and their beginnings—Mr. Henry Irving and "The Bells"—Got in search of a piano—His interview with the superior of a convent—Nourrit, the celebrated tenor, and King Bomba—The superior's eye for the main chance—Got's diplomacy—The *brasserie L'Esperance*—*Brasseries* of former days—A *mot* of Augustine Brohan.

IN his *Histoire des Petits Théâtres de Paris depuis leur Origine*, Nicolas Brazier tells the following anecdote. In 1814, when the Allied Armies entered Paris, a Russian officer was heard to inquire anxiously for his nearest way to the Comédie-Française, and, the necessary information having been obtained, seen to drive straight off to the Rue de Richelieu, to secure

his seats for that very evening. This story must be the apology for my having devoted so large a space in these notes to the Comédie-Française in particular, and theatrical doings in general; for I fancy that the interest in those doings has increased rather than diminished, especially with educated English and American readers, since the beginning of the century, and in this instance I do not profess to write for any other class. But they must not expect long dissertations on the comparative merits of the French and English stages, nor would-be-profound criticisms. If I have any opinions at all on the subject, I intend to keep them rigorously to myself. Montesquieu has said that every country has the government it deserves. I think that the same might be said with regard to a nation's dramatic literature and theatrical institutions; besides, when a man who is no longer in the prime of life, and who has never been addicted to frolics, has taken off his coat and hat, turned up his shirt-sleeves, and carried a band-box for an actress—even the greatest of her time—in order to be present at a dress rehearsal, from which the author of the piece was determined to exclude any and every journalist, that man has virtually abdicated all claim to the title of a serious historian of the drama. He is at best but an anecdote-monger, a chronicler of small talk, a gossiper. I am, after all, no more than

that; and if I should succeed now and then in amusing others, it is because I have strictly fulfilled the essential condition of becoming a *causeur;* for many, many years I have listened a good deal. Auguste Vacquerie, Victor Hugo's most intimate friend and staunchest admirer, has laid it down that "*savoir parler, n'est que savoir parler; savoir* CAUSER; *c'est savoir parler et écouter.*" For the first three or four years after my introduction to the green-room of the Comédie-Française, which happened early in the sixties, I did not open my lips once a week, except to answer a question. To begin with, I was too young, and though my grand-uncles were by no means starched or conventional in their mode of bringing me up, they would have gently but firmly resented any attempt of mine to take part in the conversation, even when I had reached the age of twenty. Secondly, on the evening of my first visit to the green-room of the Comédie-Française, the late Augustine Brohan was engaged in a "trial of wit," to use the stereotyped expression, with three or four would-be young admirers, and she positively frightened me out of my wits—I do not mean to perpetrate an atrocious pun, but am merely recording a sober fact. I judged the whole of her fellow actors and actresses by her. In after years, I learned to discriminate between real wit and flippant *méchanceté*, and fancied that

I would not have been afraid to pit myself against her in the latter respect; but for the moment I was stricken dumb in her presence. For at least a decade she had the effect of a wet blanket on me. When I heard Albert Chevalier sing, "It isn't what he says; it's the nasty way he says it," I was irresistibly reminded of Augustine Brohan, to whom, in the course of these pages, I shall probably refer again.

But few of those whom I saw there in my young days remain; most of them are dead; the rest have retired from the stage. The woman I was afraid of was laid to rest last year; Bressant, whom I admired more than any actor of his time in his own parts, Regnier and Samson, two geniuses in their own way, have gone over to the majority long ago: Delaunay and Febvre, the latter a new-comer at the period of which I treat, have said farewell to the public to all intents and purposes; Madame Madeleine Brohan no longer delights us with her finished impersonations; Madame Judith, after she became Madame Bernard-Derosnes, took to her husband's profession, and gives the French some admirable translations of Miss Braddon's novels and others. Fortunately, among those who still bear an active part in upholding the prestige of the "House of Molière" is Edmond Got—a host in himself, and one of the men of whom I have a most vivid recollection, both as an artist and as a man, for he

is no less admirable in the latter than in the former capacity; as such I may be permitted to dwell upon him at greater length than on any of the others.

Lest this praise should seem exaggerated, I give an anecdote which I had from the late Emile Augier himself, and I am the more inclined to do this, seeing that it supplies, as it were, the *genesis* of the last, and perhaps the most remarkable piece that came from the great playwright's pen. I am alluding to *Les Fourchambault*, for the failure of which on the English stage, under the title of "The Crisis," I have never been able to account.

The author and the actor had been college chums, but college chums such as one rarely meets with nowadays, except in novels and plays. They climbed the ladder of fame together, and but for their mutual aid, the ascent might have been slower than it was. There is great doubt whether, clever as were *Les Effrontés* and *Le Fils de Giboyer*, they would have withstood the ordeal of hostile criticism as successfully as they did, but for Got's absolutely electrical acting. I remember the *première* of *Les Effrontés* as well as if it had been yesterday, though exactly thirty-three years have elapsed as I write about it. They were rehearsing *Tannhauser* at the Opera in that month of January 1861. It was bitterly cold, large masses of ice were obstructing the navigation of the Seine; the Second Empire was in all its glory; the New Year's reception at the Tuileries had been most

brilliant, for every one was congratulating every one else on the victories of the French armies in China; Graziani, Gardoni, and Mlle. Marie Battu were drawing crowded houses at the Italian Opera; the public were besieging the Vaudeville, at that time situated on the Place de la Bourse, to see Sardou's *Femmes Fortes;* the Gymnase turned money away every night with another of Augier's pieces — the one written in collaboration with Jules Sandeau; but what I remember that particular January most by was my New Year's present, which came directly from Napoleon III., though it was not handed to me personally. It was a set of newly-minted silver coins, with the laurel-wreathed head of the Emperor. I had them four days before the end of the year, and for the next six weeks people were vainly trying to get them.

Napoleon III. was present at the first performance of *Les Effrontés,* and stayed till the very end, frequently giving the signal for applause. Subsequently, he had to take up the cudgels for Augier against his detractors and assailants, the most violent of whom was Louis Veuillot, the clerical champion, who, as was his wont, indulged in personal vituperation, and called Augier's grandfather, Pigault Lebrun, "a gaol-bird." Thereupon, Augier sent his seconds to Veuillot, who refused to fight on the ground of religious scruples. Augier took his revenge, and gave a

striking portrait of the polemist in the sequel to *Les Effrontés*, viz., *Le Fils de Giboyer*. He called Veuillot "a juggler before the Holy Ark," to which the "saintly man" replied that he was only the "'chucker-out' of the establishment, appointed specially to take by the scruff of the neck the rowdy jokers and ill-behaved dogs that might trouble the divine service."

I repeat, clever as were these pieces, they might have met with a different fate but for the electrical acting of Got, for every now and then they drag. On the other hand, it is but fair to say that this was the grandest opportunity Got had had until then, and he had been a *sociétaire* for over eleven years. French actors have before now been indebted for great chances to playwrights, and it is generally the latter who have proved the more grateful. In the instances of Got and Augier, the gratitude was absolutely mutual, though, as both often said, "The bonds of friendship could not very well be closer than they are." "To arrive at a more intense feeling for one another," added Augier, on the occasion of his telling me the story of *Les Fourchambault*, "one of us would have to be changed into a woman." Then he went on. "I had produced nothing for several years, and my comrade, more tenacious of my reputation than I was myself, regretted this, especially in view of the frequently recurring successful productions of Dumas and Sardou."

Got was frequently urging me to write a new play, but, as a rule, I shook my head, until one evening during a conversation in the green-room an idea struck me. 'Perhaps you are right,' I said of a sudden. 'It won't do, maybe, to get more rusty than I am already. I think I will write you a new part.' I never saw my old friend's countenance change so suddenly as at that moment. He looked positively distressed, and after a while he replied in a tone of protest—'You misunderstood me, that was not what I meant when I asked you to write a new play. I do not want you to write a new part for me; my capabilities in that respect are pretty nigh exhausted. You and others have pretty well drawn everything I could represent. Besides, I have neither the time nor the inclination to study a new part.' 'Don't you worry about that,' I answered, for, having once got hold of my idea, I clung to it; 'don't you worry about that. There will be no need for you to study or to polish your part. I am merely going to photograph the real Got as I know him, a good sort, a good chum; in short, a thorough brick.'

"That was the commencement of *Les Fourchambault*, and all those who know my old friend agree that Bernard is only Got under another name, and that, given the circumstances, Got would have acted as did Bernard. Conscious, however, as was Got from the beginning of the similarity of

character between himself and the shipowner whom I had drawn, he was equally aware that the outer man could not be like him either in speech or in manners. He felt more worried about this than I did, for I knew that, come what might, he would get over the difficulty. I knew exactly what he would do, though he did not suspect me of divining his thoughts. It turned out exactly as I expected; for three or four weeks running he was absent from Paris for a whole day and night, and no one seemed to know whither he had gone. Serious as they appear to be in the Rue de Richelieu, they are fond of a joke, and in this instance they relished the one they had concocted more than usually, for they thought they were speaking the truth when they said—'Voilà que Got se dérange maintenant.' With his never-relaxing conscientiousness, he had simply put himself into communication with an intimate acquaintance at Havre, taken a few trips to the seaport, and from half-a-dozen individuals constructed a type which I have no hesitation in proclaiming to be one of, if not the most perfect on the modern stage."

Augier was right; Bernard is one of the most wonderful creations of the modern stage, just because at the first blush "there is nothing in it." It was a far more difficult task to portray Bernard than to portray Rabbi David Sichel in *L'Ami Fritz*, for in the latter case there were

many salient points to get hold of; there was the dress, the gait, the gesture, the diction, the accent, and above all, the facial play of the provincial Jewish minister, who, in spite of his official position, does not occupy a very elevated plane in society. In that, as in the later study, Got adopted the same method. He went to M. Isidore, the late Grand Rabbin of France, and told him of his predicament; and the latter invited the actor to supper one Friday night, when there were gathered around his hospitable board a dozen or more models to choose from. They were not hampered by the conventionalities of "good society," which enjoins, even in France, the duty of not displaying one's feelings physiognomically, orally, or plastically, which votes picturesque attitudes "bad form," decrees the adoption of a certain diapason irrespective of emotion, and bids the features to remain stolid whether in joy or sorrow. The comedian had only to single out one specimen, and to reproduce his peculiarities in every detail, which, in fact, he did. That's how Got "constructs," or "composes," as the French say, his characters, plus his own brains, as Opie would have remarked.

That such an artist should have no history apart from his profession is not unnatural. There are, however, two utterly different ways of looking at one's profession. One man considers it a

watch-tower, the altitude of which gives him greater facilities for surveying his fellow-creatures; another considers it merely the top of a wall enclosing the whole of the world, beyond which there is nothing worthy of his attention. When that very clever actor Parade died a few years ago, some of his old comrades were discussing in the *café* next to the Vaudeville a suitable inscription for his gravestone. For the better guidance of the reader, I may inform him that I am alluding to the Café Américain; but I wish to add that with regard to the *clientèle* of this famous house of entertainment, "the evening and the morning are not one day." Having pointed this out, I proceed. We were, then, discussing a suitable epitaph, when one of the brothers Lionnet, both of whom play-goers of the last generation but one are sure to remember, remarked—"Save an allusion to his eminence in his profession, I fail to see what one could put on that gravestone, except that 'he played baccarat, and did not draw at five.'" The whole of Parade was painted in that one sentence. Not his greatest detractors—if he have any, which I doubt—would accuse Got of such onesidedness; he and Febvre are men of extensive reading, and need not yield the palm in that respect to their famous predecessor at the Comédie, Regnier. Got's literary baggage is, however, very small; it consists of a solitary operatic libretto, entitled *François Villon;* but

those competent to judge have voted it a small masterpiece from a literary point of view.

Apropos of this extensive reading, and the use Got makes of it in everyday life, the late M. Emile Perrin, of whom I shall have occasion to speak now and then in these pages, told me a rather amusing anecdote. The late Administrator-General was, though a clever man, by no means a sprightly one, especially in business hours; and he disliked "scenes." M. Mounet-Sully, who has considerably toned down within the last ten years, did not always have his temper under control, and there were many violent altercations at the meetings of the Board of Management, of which the famous representative of the heroes of Shakespeare and Victor Hugo is a member. Animated by the best intentions, he had, like Lamartine, the misfortune to fancy himself a great authority on financial and economical questions, and, as such, objected frequently to M. Perrin's lavish expenditure in the way of scenery, adjuncts, and dresses. I am afraid I shall puzzle the reader by calling M. Mounet-Sully an idealist and naturalist in one, so I hasten to explain. Hamlet, Othello, Orestes, Hippolyte, Hernani, Ruy-Blas, and Rodrigue are to M. Mounet-Sully not the mere creations of the poet's fancy, but beings that have existed in the flesh. He can enter fully into the motives that swayed their actions, which, extravagant as

they may seem to sober-minded people, are perfectly logical to him; if pressed very hard, he would probably admit that they spoke as the poet makes them speak. He would fain endow the public with his own imagination; and where he himself is concerned, he succeeds to a marvellous extent. So far so good. But they refuse to see with their mind's eyes the battlements of Elsinore, the sunlit island of Cyprus, the majestic cathedrals of Spain; they want all these pictorially represented to them, and M. Mounet-Sully, who, his idealism notwithstanding, is naturalistic enough to rehearse for weeks in his stage clothes, so as to get used to them and destroy their unpractical, brand-new look, called the public names in consequence, and nearly always discussed M. Perrin's budget, where it related to such adjuncts, in violent terms. There was no means of stopping him until Got one day bethought himself of a masterly move. Some time before that he had told Mounet-Sully the well-known story of Edmund Kean lashing himself into a rage by shaking a ladder before entering upon the grand scene of "The Merchant of Venice." "Here you have got your real artist," exclaimed Mounet-Sully, carried away by admiration. A characteristic trait of Mounet-Sully's was that, like Beethoven in some of his symphonies, he prefaced the storm by peaceful, gentle strains. Mounet-Sully nearly always began by

disclaiming all idea of making himself disagreeable; the moment they heard such protestations, his fellow-committeemen knew what to expect. On the occasion in question, Mounet-Sully was softly delivering his preamble, when in the middle of it Got held up his hand and asked permission of M. Perrin to ring the bell. "A ladder for M. Mounet-Sully," said Got to the attendant who answered the summons. Then turning to his comrades, he explained—"The ladder will facilitate the business, as in the case of Kean." The tragedian sat as if thunderstruck, but there was no scene during that meeting, and subsequently, whenever he showed signs of becoming restless, the order was repeated. There is no longer any necessity for doing so, for Mounet-Sully has become one of M. Claretie's most valuable coadjutors in budgetary questions, but the conversion has given rise to a delightful saying at the Comédie: "Mounet s'agite et Got le mène." *Anglicé:* "Mounet proposes and Got disposes."

"After all," said Got one evening more than fifteen years ago, when he told us this story, "after all, Mounet's bark is worse than his bite (il offense plus qu'il ne punit), and I have tamed more formidable creatures, and not only more formidable, but more vicious." We knew that we were in for a good thing, and gathered round him, for Got is at all times reluctant to talk about himself, and when for the nonce he

relaxes this reserve, one has to seize the opportunity. "It's the only time I felt my head very insecure on my shoulders," the comedian went on. "It was during the Commune, and we were going to London. There might and there might not have been a difficulty for the elder members of the Comédie, but," this with a jolly smile, "there was Delaunay"—Delaunay must have been considerably over fifty at the time—"and Laroche, and several other youngsters whom we wanted to take with us, and who, in virtue of their youth, came under the provisions of the new decree of incorporation into the battalions of the Commune, issued by the Central Committee. To have attempted to take our young comrades out of Paris with us without some kind of passport would have not only resulted in their arrest, but in the arrest of all of us, and, by common consent, I was selected, as the *doyen* of the Comédie, to beard the hyena in his lair, for, really and truly, it is no misnomer to apply the word to Raoul Rigault and his coadjutor Dacosta. So I made my way to the Prefecture, and, after a good deal of preliminary inquisition, was ushered into the presence of 'the delegate at the police.' I have seen a great many villainous faces in my time. I rarely saw a more villainous, and if there was one drop of the milk of human kindness in Rigault's disposition, he ought to have brought an action for libel against nature for

having given him such a face. Not on account of its ugliness, for I do not think it was very ugly, but on account of its fiendish expression. His reception of me was exactly what I expected. He put up his eye-glass, and when I told him the nature of my business, looked me down from head to foot and began to grin. I considered it best to grin too, and waited silently. 'So you want to give the signal for deserting the Commune at the very moment when Versailles is making up its mind to attack us?' he said, scowling at me as hard as he could scowl. 'These young men for whom you want passports no doubt consider play-acting a higher mission than shouldering a musket in defence of their country. Let me tell you that I would not give twopence for the whole of that crew.' Curiously enough," Got interrupted himself, "Rigault at that moment reminded me of my former colonel, when I told him years ago of my intention to leave the service when my term had expired. 'What,' he yelled, 'you want to leave the regiment to go a-play-acting, and at the very time you have got your first promotion. Very well; go back to your paint and tinsel. If you had remained here you might have become a *maréchal des logis* (quarter-master-sergeant); among that lot you'll never be anything at all.' But I bit my tongue and said nothing. I merely continued to grin, for I saw plainly enough that the slightest remark on my

part would set him in a blaze. Seeing that I did not answer, he went on in the same strain, until at last I perceived a little opening to put a word in. 'What good would our remaining do to the Commune? I do not suppose it wants Mascarilles or Scapins,' I observed in a slightly bantering tone, though I pledge you my word that I felt by no means in a bantering mood. The public and the critics have often praised me for my acting; if one of them had been able to see me on that day, they would have called me a Garrick or a Talma, I feel sure, for never before or since have I acted as I did then. I knew that one unguarded movement, one misplaced word, would mean imprisonment, and I knew equally well what imprisonment meant, so I merely continued to grin until Rigault left off grinning and burst into laughter. 'You're a d . . . good sort,' he roared; 'you are . . .' I followed suit immediately. 'I am trying to be the best d . . . sort possible,' I roared in unison. 'Well, you shall have your permits,' he went on. 'For Laroche and the others?' 'For citizens Laroche and the others; but take care you do not make yourself a nuisance any more.' 'In order to prevent my being a nuisance, you should give me the permits at once.' 'At once! at once!' he repeated; 'that kind of thing requires time.' 'Time! time!' I said, imitating him as well as possible; 'it does not require much time. All it wants is some paper

and a pen, "tout ce qu'il faut pour écrire."' '"Tout ce qu'il faut pour écrire," as that idiot of a Scribe said in his idiotic plays.' 'As that idiot of a Scribe said in his idiotic plays,' I echoed. 'After all, that won't take long.' 'That's true; you are right. Dacosta, give me some paper. Here are your permits; and now, be off as quickly as you can, and let me hear no more of you and your mummers.'"

Subsequently, Got had to confess that there were people who, if not so dangerous as Raoul Rigault, were harder to "get over" than he. In order, however, to place this story in its suitable frame, I must be allowed to say a few words about the properties of the Comédie-Française. I again beg to remind the reader that these pages are absolutely made up of random notes, primarily collected with the object to amuse, but not disdaining to convey an interesting bit of information to the student of history, literature, and art, as well as to the mere lover of anecdote.

For many years I was a constant visitor to the Bibliothèque Nationale—the Bibliothèque Impériale that was—and among my most favourite researches were those connected with the stage. The man who as a lad of eleven was taken to see Rachel and every other theatrical and operatic celebrity, visiting the capital as well as the second most important town of Holland, who had sat spell-bound at the questionable talent of that

curious negro actor Ira Aldridge when he came accompanied by a German company, he being the only one performing in English, the lad who a year or so before that had been a member of a "Children's Comedy Company," under the management of Mr. Edouard van Biene, the eldest brother of Mr. Auguste van Biene; that lad was almost sure to preserve his taste for things theatrical in his later life.

Among the extracts from these MSS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale, I have before me several, dealing with the question of scenery, dresses, and properties of the French stage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I am aware that in a book of this kind such notes are somewhat out of place. "Anybody might have collected them," says the impatient reader. "True; but no one did;" consequently they are, as it were, voices from the past. Besides, in this instance they are not voluminous.

As a rule—the comedies of Molière were the exception—the stage represented a palace, or a room—*un palais à volonté*, or *une chambre à quatre portes*, as the original has it. The first was used as a frame for heroic tragedy—no matter whether the scene was laid in Greece, Rome, or elsewhere; the second when less exalted personages had to be shown "in their habit as they lived." They might be Spaniards, as in Corneille's *Cid*, where the action of the whole

of the five acts is unfolded in the said "room with four doors," or they might be Assyrians; the local colour of their surroundings was deemed of no importance: the play was the thing. And when at last the French comedians, stimulated by the example of the Opéra, did make an attempt at a little more accuracy, they took care to emulate the thrift of which Hamlet speaks. In 1702 they order a new set of scenery for a tragedy entitled *Montezume*, but with the express proviso that it shall be *aussi peu Mexicain que possible* (textual), so that it may be used for other tragedies. Molière's *Psyché* was written for the express purpose of utilising a magnificent set representing the "lower regions," which originally had been painted for the Italian opera of *Ercole Amante*, performed before Cardinal Mazarin, thus showing that Mr. Vincent Crummles with his pump was an unconscious plagiarist, and that the late Mr. Wills was worse when he mutilated Holtei's *Lorbeerbaum und Bettelstab* in his "Man o' Airlie," lest a statue he had modelled should be lost to the admiration of the public. I agree with Molière that a dramatist "peut prendre son bien où il le trouve," but I object to the dramatist taking "son mal là où il ne le trouve pas."

To return to my subject. The indifference to topographical and chronological accuracy in the matter of scenery continued to prevail as late as

the most flourishing period of Scribean comedy. The Comédie-Française, thanks to the persistent efforts of the masters of the Romanticist School, was perhaps not so flagrantly ridiculous in that respect as the rest of the Paris theatres, in which, even late in the sixties, I have seen comedies and melodramas of sterling value enacted amidst surroundings and with adjuncts that would not have been tolerated at a London transpontine playhouse at that period. And the difference between the Comédie-Française and the rest—with the exception of the Gymnase under Montigny—was one of degree rather than of kind. With the advent of M. Arsène Houssaye, the first serious blow at the old-fashioned system of "making things do" was aimed. Since then the Comédie-Française has pursued a steadily progressive policy; but I have an idea that in the matter of scenic reform, England has outstripped her nearest Continental neighbour—nay, the French will tell us now and then that we are "overdoing the thing." I fancy the question might be solved by a conscientious examination of the respective values of "realism" and "impressionism."

To the late M. Perrin belongs the credit of having manfully upheld the new reform inaugurated by M. Arsène Houssaye, and it is not disparaging M. Jules Claretie's artistic capabilities to say that the utmost he can do is to follow in his

immediate predecessor's footsteps. A little while ago I ventured to remark, that a nation has not only the government, but the dramatic literature and theatrical institutions she deserves. Whatever France may deserve in the way of government, she decidedly deserves her Comédie-Française, for Republicans and Legitimists, Imperialists, and Constitutional Monarchists alike, have for at least a half-century vied with one another in keeping up its prestige. Nepotism and corruption may have been rife in every department of the public service; but no Minister of Public Instruction, or Director of Fine Arts under him, has ever attempted, for the last forty-five years at least, to select as Administrator-General of the Comédie-Française a man who had not already made his name in some other branch of art. By preference the minister selected a man versed in the literature of his country, for if, as the French say, "literature in France may lead to any and every thing, even to a bed in the hospital, and to a pauper's grave;" it has also frequently led to the Administratorship of the Comédie-Française. During the time mentioned, there has been only one man at the head of affairs in the Rue de Richelieu who was not a *littérateur* by profession—namely, the late M. Emile Perrin. Seveste, the immediate predecessor of M. Arsène Houssaye, does not count. It is not libelling his memory to say that no minister would have appointed him. In spite

of all his shortcomings, he was placed in his position by the Comedians themselves; Samson and Regnier, the two most literary and cultured comedians of their time, deliberately setting at defiance the laws that govern the Comédie-Française, in order to gratify their political passions. For this happened at the beginning of the Second Republic. Much may be pardoned to Frenchmen under such circumstances. Good cometh out of evil, notwithstanding the Biblical warning to the contrary, and we must not forget that the Comédie-Française, as we see it to-day, is in reality the outcome of the scission of a company much more divided by political hatred than by professional jealousy. I, on the other hand, must not forget that I am *not* writing history.

The appointment of the late M. Emile Perrin, then, was the only exception to the rule that had prevailed for many years, though that appointment would have never been made but for a mistake that happened long ago. After the Revolution of '48, Emile Perrin, who was a painter and a pupil of Gros and Delaroche, and Perrin's brother, who knew a great deal about literature, were warmly recommended to the then Minister of Public Instruction—Emile for a curatorship of one of the museums, his brother for the directorship of one of the subsidised theatres. Both were successful in their applications, but through a curious error of one of the clerks, the Christian

names were changed in the official decrees appointing them, and Emile, the painter, became the director of the Opéra-Comique, while his brother, with very distinct literary tendencies, was sent as curator to the museum at Rouen. Emile Perrin took a liking to his new occupation, and some years later simply "stepped across the way" from the Place Boïeldieu to the Rue Le Pelletier, where, in spite of the glorious memory of Dr. Louis Véron, who had mounted and staged the first grand opera Meyerbeer composed for the Parisians, he amazed the sons of these Parisians by his gorgeous production of the composer's last — *l'Africaine.* At the beginning of the Third Republic, when Halanzier took the direction of the Académie Nationale de Musique, M. Thiers appointed Emile Perrin to the Administratorship of the Comédie-Française. Now, it must not be inferred for a moment that Emile Perrin was a great painter, or that he would have become one, if, instead of taking to theatrical managing, he had pursued his original career; but I may safely say, that no great artist ever understood the blending of shades better than he, and his technical art-training made him a true *collaborateur* of the scenic artists he employed, instead of a hindrance, as are many managers, who are not only absolutely ignorant of the laws of perspective, composition, &c., but unwilling to admit that

ignorance. If the dead could speak, and the living would speak, the shades of Clarkson-Stanfield, David Roberts, and Beverley, and the voices of those who have so worthily succeeded them, would give us the explanation of the frequent but startling spectacle of a David looking in at Goliath's second-floor bedroom, without as much as standing on tiptoe. With men like Emile Perrin, and his immediate successor, with whom we may meet again, such things become impossible, and the stage becomes a banquet to the eye as well as to the intellect.

Emile Perrin was too sensible to devote all his energies to the attainment of scenic perfection only; he was probably the "greatest fidget," with regard to properties, that ever ruled the destinies of the "House of Molière," and this "fidgetiness" brings me to Got's second encounter with adversaries "harder to conciliate than Raoul Rigault"—I am quoting his own words.

The absence of M. Coquelin *aîné*. during the late visit of the Comédie-Française to London deprived us of the pleasure of seeing Erckmann-Chatrian's *Rantzau;* but those who have heard Mascagni's opera founded on the piece, will remember that the action of it is laid in Alsace during the late twenties, and that in the second act there is a piano in the room. The difficulty was to find the piano of the period, and Perrin would be satisfied with nothing but the

real thing, or a very close simulacrum. He listened most attentively to all the suggestions for having one manufactured, a grim smile playing on his lips. "There is but one objection to what you say," he remarked quietly, as was his wont; "where will you get the model to copy from? Consult any piano manufacturer who knows his business, and he will tell you that the difference between the instrument of to-day and that of sixty years ago"—*Les Rantzau* was produced in March 1882—"does not lie so much in the outside as in the inside. An old engraving, therefore, would not advance you in the least. And if you did get a genuine model, would it not be more sensible to buy or borrow it, and so save unnecessary trouble?"

There is one member of the Comédie-Française upon whom words of wisdom are never lost, Edmond Got. He forthwith began to consult some of the friends of his youth, giving them an exact description of what he wanted. One of these, a lady, remembered having learnt her scales on such an instrument, but at the death of her mother, when she had already set up housekeeping for herself, she had parted with it to a young musician who since then had made a name, but who, alas! was in the sere and yellow leaf. By dint of cudgelling his brain, the superannuated composer managed to recollect that he had disposed of the piano years ago to

a convent. He offered to give Got a letter of introduction to the Lady Superior; and provided with these credentials the comedian made his way to the Rue d'Enfert-Rochereau. "The moment I had rung the bell," said Got, "I felt like taking to my heels; but while I was making up my mind, a key was turned in the door, and I found myself face to face with a Sister, who told me to wait in the courtyard while she took the letter to the Superior. In a few moments she returned. 'Monsieur has come for the piano,' she remarked, taking stock of me as if I were some strange, outlandish animal. 'If Monsieur will come along with me, the Superior will show it to him.' On the threshold of the inner building, in fact, the Superior stood waiting for me, and she took me through a couple of seemingly endless passages, with a great number of doors on each side—the doors of the nuns' cells, as I discovered afterwards—while another Sister came on behind, making a terrific din all the while with a large bell she carried. For the life of me I could not make out the meaning of that incessant clanging, until I suddenly remembered the wording of the musician's letter—'I have the honour to present to you M. Got, of the Comédie-Française, who is desirous of buying the old piano which I sold to the convent years ago, and of which he stands in the most urgent need.' To these 'simple

souls' I was an actor, and as such excommunicated by the Church, and every one who could, had to get out of my way. That's why the bell kept clanging, for, my eyes being opened, I immediately noticed what I may call the 'spasmodic' closing of several doors as I went along. Instinctively I hung my head, not from shame, but to discover whether there might not be some faint odour of sulphur about me. At last we got to a small room with a grand piano in it, but not at all the instrument of M. Perrin's dreams. Its age was right enough, but there was no individuality about it. It might have done as a makeshift, and I asked the price. I was told five hundred francs. I shook my head, and remarked that a *bric-à-brac* dealer would have asked me about twenty francs. 'That may be,' replied the Lady Superior, "but you would have to find it first, and your friend says that you stand *in urgent need* of it. Besides, we are virtually doing a wrong thing in disposing of the instrument for so profane an entertainment as a theatrical performance.'

"I ventured to point out to the worthy Superior that Erckmann-Chatrian's play aimed at inculcating a highly moral, nay, a divine lesson—that of forgiveness between brothers; but her answer almost took my breath away, or would have done, if I had not had a precedent of it in my own recollection. 'There may be truth in

what you say,' remarked the Superior, 'but the Church explicitly discountenances all attempts of the stage to *usurp* her functions, and preaching that lesson "from behind the footlights," I think you call it,' she added with a smile, 'is distinctly usurping the functions of the Church.'

"The reply instantly reminded me of an episode in the life of Nourrit, after he had voluntarily exiled himself at Naples, not from jealousy but from ungrounded fear of Duprez. The story was told to me by my professor, Provost. I don't think it is generally known, so I give it you here. Provost had it from Auber or Donizetti himself, but I am not certain which. Nourrit signed an engagement with the celebrated *impresario* Barbaja, the same who brought out Rossini's *Barbier de Séville.* As a matter of course, though afraid of Duprez, Nourrit was anxious to try conclusions with his rival, and he chose for his *début Guillaume Tell,* seeing that Duprez had selected the same for his *début* in Paris.

"But in those days King Bomba reigned at Naples. It is only fair, though, to the memory of this idiotic would-be tyrant, to say that Nourrit would have been looked upon by every European monarch of that time as a dangerous firebrand, for, during the Revolution of 1830, he had made it a point of singing the 'Marseillaise' in and out of season, in fact, he had, in the opinion of many

competent judges, distinctly impaired his voice by so doing. No sooner, therefore, did the notice go forth of Nourrit's proposed *début* in *Guillaume Tell* than the Censorship interfered. 'A piece which is virtually the apotheosis of rebellion against the constituted authorities,' it said, 'Never, never, never.' After that Barbaja proposed *Les Huguenots*, and found that he had got from the frying-pan into the fire. 'A piece which is virtually an indictment of Catholicism,' said the Censorship; 'preposterous; not to be thought of for a moment.' 'What about *La Juive?*' asked Barbaja a few days later. 'We should be at all times reluctant to sanction a piece by a Jew,' was the reply. 'We do not consider that Meyerbeer's selection of *Les Huguenots* was a mere matter of accident, but a piece by a Jewish composer which tends to the glorification of a Jewish hero; impossible.' The *impresario* was pretty well at his wits' end, and, as happens usually when a man is in such a state of mind, the further he went, the worse he fared, for he was ill advised enough to offer *La Muette de Portici* (Masaniello), the principal act of which, as you all know, represents a revolution in Naples itself. The result of that suggestion may easily be guessed. In sheer despair, Barbaja sent for Donizetti, being determined to have a new opera to which no possible objection could be taken. The subject of it was to be *Polyeucte*,

and the libretto to follow as closely as possible Corneille's tragedy of the same name. Donizetti composed the music in a comparatively short time. Nourrit was delighted with his part; but no sooner had the title of the new work transpired than the Censorship interfered once more. Then Barbaja prevailed on Nourrit to ask a special audience of the King, which was granted. The tenor deferentially points out to the sovereign that *Polyeucte* represents the victory of faith. 'That's true enough,' replies Bomba: 'Polyeucte is a saint; the saints have their place in the calendar, their actions supply valuable texts from the pulpit; but the stage should not encroach upon the Church's functions, and I will not give you leave to perform the work.'

"It was this answer," Got went on, "which recurred to me when I heard the Lady Superior's motive for asking such an utterly extravagant price for her old piano. Of course, I kept my thoughts to myself, and attempted to bargain; but she proved as hard as a rock, for she had made up her mind that we had not the time to look elsewhere. Seeing which, I asked for twenty-four hours to consider the matter. It was well I did, for on my return to the solitary passages—still accompanied by the bell—I caught a glimpse, in an open room, of another instrument, very rickety and dusty, and emitting a plaintive, jingling

sound. The moment I saw it, I knew that it was much more suitable to our purpose than the other. But I said little, merely remarking that I would like that one, to save the costly instrument at home, on which an adopted daughter of mine—you know that I have no adopted daughter —was learning her scales. Next day I returned and asked for another week to consider about the first instrument, and bought the second for fifty francs. I took particular care to have it carted to the theatre before I left the convent. It was, it appears, the very thing that was wanted, though no one had the faintest idea of its being there. Perrin was delighted, and so was I; but I'll undertake no more expeditions of that kind. I do not mind the bell, but I object to the greed of 'those simple souls.'"

Twice within a comparatively short space have the names of Erckmann-Chatrian—for they were two—cropped up under my pen, and I fancy that the English reader will not be displeased to become better acquainted with two men to whom, if he, the reader, be a lover of the drama, and if that love be accompanied by the ambition of seeing the English stage become the equal of that of other countries, he owes a certain amount of gratitude. I am fully aware that Mr. Henry Irving had made his mark before the evening on which he startled London play-goers by his truly masterly impersonation of Matthias in "The

Bells," but I fancy I am justified in saying that, but for the late Leopold Lewis' adaptation of *Le Juif Polonais*, Mr. Irving's great popularity might have been longer in coming. If proof of this were wanted, it would be found in Mr. Irving's generous provision for Lewis till the day of his death, though Lewis was little more than the translator of Erckmann-Chatrian's play; but Mr. Irving considered—and justly—that the finger-post to the road to fame, however meagre its information, should not be left to fall into decay after the wayfarer had reached a magnificent goal. I trust I may be forgiven this indiscrétion—if it be one—seeing that the fact is not absolutely a secret; I only wanted to point out the English playgoer's indebtedness to the two Alsatian playwrights, but could scarcely do so without mentioning Mr. Irving's handsome recognition of his small obligation to Lewis. Macaulay tells us that "the dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint until they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him—a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood." To cultured Englishmen, the most interesting fact in connection with Erckmann-Chatrian is, that their play gave the greatest actor on the contemporary English stage his first real chance. This is the thread of their garment I wished to exhibit.

It is more than thirty years ago since I first caught sight of the two novelists and dramatists whose stories, at any rate, have met with such a cordial reception in England. But they were far from famous then.

On the day of the ex-King of Westphalia's funeral I happened to sprain my ankle, and was taken home by an old German gentleman who was a native of Cassel, and his grandson, who was a Parisian by birth. The elder's stories about the Court of King Jerôme caused my grand-uncles to take a great fancy to him, and he and his grandson became frequent guests at our house.

The grandfather, who was considerably over seventy, was hale, hearty, and active to a degree, a very entertaining *raconteur*, but, of course, scarcely fitted as a companion for a lad of my age. Young Körner, who was only a few years my senior, was somewhat more serious than his grandsire, but by no means what we would call a "prig," though exceedingly well read. He had spent several years in Germany, and spoke German as fluently as French, a great advantage from my uncles' point of view, seeing that they were anxious that I should do the same. They had not the courage, however, to send me away for any length of time for that purpose, so young Körner seemed a kind of godsend to them. Young Körner had brought a good deal

of knowledge back with him from Germany, but also a decided taste for *lager bier*, and in those days *lager bier*, and especially good *lager bier*, was not to be had in Paris by merely putting one's money down for it. The stuff sold in the so-called *brasseries* was, even to my uneducated taste, as vile as the *faro* and *lambiek* dispensed in the Belgian *estaminets*. Young Körner, who, without being a drunkard, was decidedly of the opinion of the German student with regard to his favourite beverage, "that one might have too much, but could never have enough of it," steadfastly refused to patronise any establishment where the genuine article was not on tap. And these establishments were few. One of the most amusing, if not the most famous, was the *Brasserie Lang* at the corner of the Rues de Rennes and Notre-Dame des Champs, but that was virtually in the Quartier Latin, and I had given my uncles my word that I would not go into the Quartier Latin either by myself or unaccompanied by some one much older than myself until I was twenty, and I meant to keep it.

Körner, to his credit be it said, never tempted me to do so, albeit that it was a great sacrifice to him to forego the jolly company of Bohemians which foregathered at Lang's; but as he felt unable to do without his beer, we went to "L'Espérance," which exists up to the present

day. Those curious in such matters will find it half-way up the Faubourg St. Denis, and almost opposite the prison of St. Lazare; and if they have never been in Germany, they will be repaid for their trouble, for it is a real *bier brasserei*, as different from the new-fangled *brasserie* as was the old-fashioned coaching inn from the modern railway hotel. Save for the name, there was nothing French about the place, and it seemed to me very little changed when I saw it about eighteen months ago. The Parisians gave it, and give it still, a wide berth after their first or second visit, for the language spoken there was and is as unfamiliar to them as Greek, though I have no doubt that now and then a detective with a smattering of German looks in "on spy-catching intent." At the time of which I am treating, the French jeered good-naturedly at the language they did not understand; at present it provokes their ire while still grating upon their nerves. Thirty years ago the *habitués* were nearly all Alsatians and Lorrainers, four-fifths employés of the Chemin de Fer de l'Est hard by, and the stranger unfamiliar with the tongue that Goethe and Heine spoke was virtually left out in the cold as far as conversational entertainment went. To the right on entering the room, in an angle made by the counter, there was a table occupied throughout the year by two customers, one of whom was always addressed

by every one as "Monsieur le Chef de Bureau." Though not very tall, he looked lank; he had a swarthy face, dark brown hair, growing low upon an intelligent forehead, a pair of restless eyes looking down upon a hooked nose, and a sensual upper lip ornamented with a stubborn moustache. He looked, in fact, more like an Italian than like a German. His companion presented a most startling contrast to him. He was a pot-bellied man, with a bald head, a florid complexion, and bright eyes glistening behind his gold spectacles, a thick moustache hiding his mouth like a curtain, and a double or triple and somewhat retreating chin. He also was an employé of the Chemin de Fer de l'Est, though I am unable to define his position, for the visitors simply addressed him as M. Erckmann. The other was M. Chatrian. They were both inveterate smokers, but M. Chatrian indulged sometimes in a cigar; M. Erckmann, as far as I could judge, never did. Some of their works had appeared then, but had not caused the slightest sensation. Of that I am certain. At that early period of my life I was a much more voracious reader than I am now. At my grand-uncles' home there foregathered a set of men, Alexandre Dumas the elder, Paul de Kock, and Joseph Méry among the number, whose constant talk was of books, and especially of books by new authors who bade fair to make their mark. Well, until I was told during my first or second

visit to "L'Espérance" that the somewhat depressing-looking couple in the angle by the counter were authors, I had not heard of them, and when after that I inquired of one of the principal booksellers in Paris with whom I was in constant communication, owing to his being the correspondent of another uncle of mine who was and is one of the two largest booksellers in Amsterdam, I was informed that Messrs. Erckmann-Chatrian's works scarcely commanded a sale. It did not prevent me from getting *Les Contes Fantastiques, Les Confessions d'un Joueur de Clarinette,* and one or two others. Of course a lad of eighteen or nineteen is not a very good judge of literary merit, and perhaps the man has not grown into a better judge than was the lad, but I may confess that I liked the works then, and that I like them better now. I have my doubts whether the French who have made such a fuss about them since Alsace-Lorraine ceased to belong to France, like them better now than they liked them then, and, *à-propos* of this, I will take leave to digress for a moment.

At the trial of Madame Lafarge, the celebrated *savant* Raspail offered to extract as much arsenic from the legs of the judge's chair as his rival, Orfila, had extracted from the viscera of the dead Lafarge. Those who know can extract the arsenic of history from almost any event, however unimportant, and in this instance I am going to

attempt the thing in connection with the novels and plays of MM. Erckmann-Chatrian, in order to show the real value of that affection of the French for the Alsatians and Lorrainers of which we have heard so much for the last twenty-three years. There is not the slightest intention on my part to cast the least reflection on the two authors. I consider most of their work exceedingly clever, and showing an intense love of their country. But at the beginning of their career, at any rate, their primary object in writing these stories was to make money. I am not blaming them, I am merely stating a fact which I will prove more fully at some future opportunity, in a chapter which will probably be devoted exclusively to the development and transformations of the "*revanche* idea."

Only those who wear the shoe know where it pinches, and even the principal employés of the railway companies during the Second Empire were not weltering in gold. Under the circumstances, MM. Erckmann-Chatrian said to themselves—"George Sand earned a great deal of money with *La Petite Fadette*, *La Mare au Diable*, *François le Champi*, and other works, the principal characters of which are simple rustics, speaking a rustic language, reproduced and renovated with consummate art. As artists we are, no doubt, inferior to Mme. Dudevant, but we are sufficiently artistic not to spoil the Alsatian and

Lorraine *patois*, and, after all, there is no harm in attempting to show that there are other interesting peoples in France besides the Beaucerons, the Morvandieux, and Solognots."

I may point out that I did not make MM. Erckmann-Chatrian say—"Alsatians and Lorrainers are just as good Frenchmen as the Beaucerons and Morvandieux." My reason for not doing this is that, before the war, the Alsatians, and to a certain extent the Lorrainers, repudiated the idea of being Frenchmen at all. It was no uncommon thing to hear a Strasburger or Mulhauser say—"Je suis Alsacien, je ne suis pas Français." Before the war, the signboards in the principal towns of Alsace, if not of Lorraine, were written both in French and German, and a goodly number did not display a single word of the former language. One frequently met natives who probably knew French, but who steadfastly refused to answer your questions if you happened to address them in that tongue, and especially if they suspected your knowledge of German, just as in certain parts of Belgium up to this day the inhabitants refuse to answer you in French. I was at Strasburg for a few days in the latter end of '71, and, in spite of the marvellous organisation of the Germans, things looked a bit chaotic; but what surprised me most was the almost entire disappearance of the German inscriptions from many of the signboards, and the seeming anxiety

of the inhabitants to air their French. An old friend of my family, who has resided many years in the capital of Alsace, who is neither a Frenchman nor a German, gave me the clue to this sudden transformation in about a dozen words. "There is money in it," he said, "and the Alsatian loves money above all things. You must ask me no further, for I cannot and dare not tell you." From other sources I discovered that he had told me the truth. The Alsatians were content to forget for the nonce, and for a consideration, that for years they had been made the laughing-stock of the French. This is by no means a mere assertion of mine. Though reputed, and justly reputed, to be the best soldiers in the French army, they were the constant butt of the French on account of their inability to catch the right accent. As for the civilians, they were simply considered so many inferior beings. The Alsatian farmer is a very shrewd creature, hard-working, and saving, and never very free with his money, even on festive occasions. But he is not one whit worse than the Normandy peasantry, and if I had to ask a favour, I would prefer to apply to the former rather than to the latter, or to the *bourgeois de Paris*, and yet the French disliked the Alsatian for the very virtues they practise with such success. Not to mince matters, the French always looked upon the Alsatians as a conquered race. I feel certain, should this book

command as many readers as the last, that this statement will be denied by self-appointed champions, either of the French themselves, or of Alsatians, just as many of my statements with regard to the late Emperor's illness have been denied; yet, on the very day I pen these words, the Paris *Figaro* (January 9, '94) contains an article by one of the greatest authorities on these matters, bearing out every word I said more than eighteen months ago. I am not alluding to duly accredited reviewers, but to irresponsible and very amateurish scribblers, who, on the strength of their official position, are sometimes allowed to rush into print without being required to produce proofs of what they state.

To return to MM. Erckmann-Chatrian, and their works, which, as I have said, fell flat for no other reason than because the French did not care a snap for the originals, let alone for their portraits. It was the story of Zeuxis and his model over again. So flat, in fact, did they fall, that a gentleman who joined the depressing couple now and then at "L'Espérance," and who, I discovered many years afterwards, was Hetzel the publisher, seemed quite to approve one night of Erckmann's suggestion that he (Erckmann) and his *collaborateur* should drown themselves. "If you carried out your idea this very night," remarked the very practical man, "it might cause a sensation, and I should be sure of

getting rid of the whole of the stock." This was said in my hearing.

However, neither Erckmann nor Chatrian so much as attempted to make a hole in the water; they put their heads together and wrote *Le Conscrit de* 1813, which was their first success, not because it treated of Alsace, but because it dealt with the invasion. Since then, MM. Erckmann-Chatrian have written nothing else but *Le Conscrit*, with variations, just as the Adelphi dramatists always write the same play and produce the same personages in different guises and with different names. The reader need not take my word for it, let him peruse the works, one after another, and he will find that I have not misstated the case. The French novelist who did that kind of thing most successfully was Paul de Kock; and I doubt whether Paul de Kock had more talent than either of the Alsatian authors, but he had more *verve* than both put together. Not long ago I was talking to an exceedingly well-read Frenchman on the subject. "There is much truth in what you say," he remarked; "but, after all, your Dickens has done the same." I stopped him at once. "Have you read Dickens lately?" I asked. "Not very recently," was the answer. "Then go and renew your acquaintance with him. There is no necessity to go through the whole of his works. Take *Bleak House* first, and study Guppy;

then read *Our Mutual Friend*, and study Mr. Venus. They are swayed by the same passion, unrequited love, they belong to the same class; study them carefully, and then tell me whether they are the *same man*, but under two different names and in different guises." My friend did as I told him, and confessed himself in the wrong.

Whatever the merits and defects of MM. Erckmann-Chatrian's works, one thing is very certain: their books would never have commanded the sale they did and do command, nor their plays have been accepted at the Comédie-Française, but for the fortuitous circumstance of the Franco-German War. Their first and best piece, from a dramatic point of view, viz., *Le Juif Polonais*, was brought out at the Théâtre de Cluny, one of the minor transpontine houses; and *L'Ami Fritz* and *Les Rantzau* would have probably shared a similar fate, but for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. That part of their history belongs to an altogether different chapter, which may or may not be written in this book. One more story in connection with one of their pieces, and I have done with them for the present. It will prove that Augustine Brohan's cleverness and spitefulness were frequently confounded by her admirers. At the *première* of *L'Ami Fritz*, when Mlle. Reichemberg, who played Suzel, exclaimed—"Oh, my poor fritters, they

are spoilt!" some one remarked—"That's a cry from the heart." "No," protested Augustine; "that's the cry of her mother." In order to appreciate this good-natured criticism, it should be known that Mlle. Reichemberg's mother was the *cordon bleu* of the Brohan family.

CHAPTER V.

Personal recollections of two eminent men: Ernest Renan and Paul de Kock—My first glimpse of Renan—The physical man—Renan's way of teaching the philosophy and the poetry of life—His way of composing his speeches and his works—What life may have meant to Renan—Renan's fondness for children—His grief at his own plainness—His almost boundless admiration of beautiful women—The genesis of *l'Abbesse de Jouarre*—An anecdote of his youth—Renan and Jules Simon—Renan as a mimic and actor—Renan's imitation of Egger the savant—His imitation of Labiche the playwright—Renan and the Abbé Delille—Renan's indifference to spiteful criticism—Paul de Kock—A Dutch lad's disappointment with Paul de Kock's appearance—The silence of the critics with regard to De Kock's works—Paul de Kock's method of work—His dress—His apartment on the Boulevard St. Martin—Pius IX.'s appreciation of Paul de Kock's works.

ONE of my most pleasant recollections is that connected with Renan, whose Christian name, by-the-bye, was Antistius, and not Ernest, and whom, at the time of his death in '92, I had known for more than thirty years; for I saw the author of *Vie de Jésus* for the first time four or five years before that work appeared. He was a visitor at my uncles', to whom he had probably been introduced by his father-in-law, Henri Scheffer, a brother of the great Ary Scheffer, and, like the latter, a countryman of theirs. I remember Henri Scheffer distinctly, for he painted my

uncles' portraits, which are preserved in the old home at Amsterdam; but I only remember his more famous brother vaguely, having only seen him once. My uncles had been of some assistance to Renan in translating for him extracts from the works of a Dutch critic (Kuehnen, perhaps), but even at that time Renan never talked "shop." If he had done so, it is more than probable that I should not have liked him as I did, or paid much attention to his conversation. But if he talked of "higher things" at all, it was in such a way that they became intelligible to a lad of my age, and I fancy that this faculty of "talking" both poetry and philosophy without being aware of it, just as Molière's M. Jourdain talked prose, constituted one of his great charms throughout his life. The physical man was not much to look at. Though not so corpulent as he became in later years, he was, to say the least, awkward in his movements; he had the habit, that clung to him to the end, of folding his fat, podgy hands on his abdomen, of stretching out one leg at full length and dreamily contemplating one foot.

I was forcibly reminded of that charm of talking poetry and philosophy without being aware of it, and of the method of secret training by which he had arrived at it, some twelve years ago at the reception of M. Victor Cherbuliez at the Académie-Française. The author of *L'Aventure de Ladislas Bolski, Le Comte Kostia, Samuel*

Brohl et Cie., could certainly not complain of a want of appreciation on the part of that peculiar audience whose laughter scarcely ever rises above a mere titter, and whose emotion rarely betrays itself except by a slight cough. They had, with a due regard for the texture of their gloves, applauded his scholarly and even brilliant speech, but it was evidently looked upon by them in the light of a preface, a kind of *lever de rideau* to the business of the day—Renan's reply. When the latter's squat and somewhat ungainly figure slowly rose on its legs, there was a distinctly audible rustling of silks, a faint sound as of the gliding of feet; the audience was settling itself more comfortably in order to listen more attentively. I have heard similar sounds at great *premières*, or in the House of Commons: at the *entrée* of some eminent actor or actress, or at the rising of some "master of debate;" it is the unspoken grace before intellectual meat. But even the intellectual banquet is subject to certain rules: however independent a genius its dispenser be, he must not disturb the sequence. In this instance the delicate dishes were soon forthcoming. Reviewing the new member's university career and his philosophical studies, Renan stopped short for a moment, then went on: "A Berlin, Monsieur, vous avez vu le vieux Schelling, qui vous parlait de tout, *excepté de philosophie.* Oh! *l'habile homme!*" The audi-

ence burst into loud laughter; it was Renan's reward for having afforded them a glimpse of *his* system of teaching philosophy. I have seen Renan rewarded still more generously for a lesson in the poetry of life, with tears this time —tears which glistened in the eyes of brave men and fair women. I believe it was at the reception of Pasteur, in the previous month of the same year (1882), but will not be certain. Touching on the modern scepticism so frequently accompanying scientific labours, Renan suddenly and without the slightest warning exclaimed—"Quant aux sceptiques, ils sont peut-être attendus, après leur mort, par la belle déception d'une vie future."

It is doubtful whether the sentences I have quoted were in the manuscripts of his speeches, never, I should say, very carefully prepared, although I have heard it stated that they were. My assumption is not without foundation. But a few years ago I translated one of Renan's books from the first proofs; when the second came, the work had to be done all over again. "He had taken up on the way," as one of his friends said. And in his speeches, I fancy, he was not unlike the smart stage-coach which starts with one or two passengers who intend going the whole of the journey. The vehicle, nevertheless, picks up travellers here, there, and everywhere, who are not mentioned in the way-

bill, and whom it sets down at intermediate points. Renan, in fact, was "a recruiting-sergeant of thought," if I may be permitted that expression. He rarely failed to perceive the possibilities of making robust soldiers for his cause out of apparently very unpromising material by dint of good feeding and judicious training. That probably was the secret underlying the charm of his conversation, and by his conversation I do not necessarily mean his familiar talk at home with his friends, or his brilliant gossip at the dinner-table; I include his official discourses, and, if it were possible to classify them as *causeries*, a good many of his writings. Unlike Coleridge, he never preached, not even in his most solemn moments, though truth compels one to state that apparently these were few and far between. At the first blush, in fact, it was difficult to determine whether to Renan life meant "a great bundle of small things, or a small bundle of great things;" but at the first blush only. The attentive listener soon became convinced that to Renan life meant a great bundle of great things —so great a bundle and so great the things as to demand the constant exertions and labours of generations upon generations of intellectual workers to gather them into one congruous, harmonious, and sightly whole; of generations upon generations of workers who should refuse to be discouraged by the unfulfilled purposes of their

predecessors, who should endeavour to hide the disappointment begotten from their abortive attempts from their successors. "Every man worthy of the name," he said one day in my hearing, "should be like that piper lad who, amidst the good and evil fortunes of a long battle under Frederick the Great, kept on piping from sunrise till sunset."

For Renan was very fond of introducing children into his metaphors, and yet the sight and the mere mention of them had a curious effect upon him. He who was rarely serious with grown-up people was apt to become grave in the presence of little ones, the reverse in that respect of the late Emile Perrin of the Comédie-Française, who rarely unbent except with youngsters. I happened to have some business with Perrin one Sunday in the summer of the year before his death. I was accompanied by a little girl of six, the daughter of an English lady then residing in Paris. I did not care to leave her in the victoria by herself, and took her up with me. At the sight of the child an instantaneous change came over the whole man. Though the question between us could have been settled in a few minutes, it took me an hour to get an answer to it, the porter being meanwhile despatched for sweets. Perrin had neither eyes nor ears but for the child, who left loaded with two large picture-books, which would be worth a small fortune to any costumier,

and a bag of *bonbons*, "which," as her mother said afterwards, "no man in his senses would have dreamt of buying." The day being fine, we took a short drive, and on our way homeward I saw Renan strolling along the Quai Malaquais. I stopped the victoria, and got out to pay my respects to him. He noticed the little girl, and went up to her, but did not say a word, merely stroking her fair hair and kissing her on the cheek. His eyes became positively filled with tears. I could not help saying—"How is it, M. Renan, that you, who are so cheerful with every one, are so grave with children?" for I had noticed the same thing on former occasions. For a moment or so he was silent, and then I told him of the little one's interview with Perrin, mainly, I confess, with the object of drawing him out. "I can quite understand it," he said at last; "to Perrin a pretty child is a picture; to me a child, whether ugly or pretty, is a problem. This one is very beautiful, but she is as likely to become the mother of so many Calibans and Sycoraxes as of so many Apollos and Dianas. In the latter end of the nineteenth century the former possibility ought to have been already guarded against by law. We have societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, to women and children. Do not you think that it is cruel to children to endow them from their birth with hereditary

ugliness. I do, *et Dieu sait, je parle en connaissance de cause.*" The latter words were spoken with an emphasis difficult to produce. Personally I feel certain, though I have no more direct evidence than the protest just quoted, that Renan's "want of good looks," to use the mildest term, was probably the only drawback to his thorough enjoyment of life. "As a young man,"[1] he says in his *Souvenirs*, "j'entrevoyais que la beauté est un don tellement supérieur, que le talent, le génie, la vertu même ne sont rien auprès d'elle, en sorte que la femme vraiment belle a le droit de tout dédaigner, puisqu'elle assemble dans sa personne même, comme un vase myrrhin, tout ce que le génie esquisse péniblement en traits affaiblis, au moyen d'une fatiguante reflexion."

Some would-be critics have construed these lines into a tacit licence for every beautiful woman to tread under foot the dictates of honour, virtue, and decency. I doubt whether Renan meant this; nay, I feel almost convinced that, theoretically, he meant nothing like it. I feel equally convinced, though, that to a beautiful woman he would have forgiven much, for he, perhaps better than any one, felt that—

[1] I have purposely put the first words of the quotation in English, because it has been asserted several times that these lines were addressed to an imaginary young man, which is not the case.

"L'âme et le corps, *toujours s'en* iront à deux,
Tant que le monde ira pas à pas, côte à côte ;
Comme s'en vont les vers classiques et les bœufs,
L'un disant : 'Tu fais mal !' et l'autre : 'C'est ta faute.'"

To understand how intensely he felt this, one must have seen him, as I have, seated at dinner between two handsome women, more or less *decolletées ;* "le chaste vieillard entre deux Suzanne," as one of the guests put it. Only those who have seen him thus will or can imagine the mental genesis of *l'Abbesse de Jouarre ;* for that romantic production is simply the despairing cry of another Faust for his vanished youth and manhood. And as in real life there is no Mephistopheles at hand to respond to the cry, and as men of Renan's stamp remain worthy of themselves and of their art and calling, in spite of the temptations of the flesh and the craving of the heart and the senses for more passionate endearments than "hallowed love" affords ; their imagination becomes unbridled ; the sensuous worship of woman, the idolatrous love of love itself, pervades their every thought ; their study, which they leave less than ever, lest temptation should assail them on its threshold, finally reeks with the *odor di femina,* which henceforth exudes from the historical treatise as well as from the religious essay. They are no more conscious of this than was Beaumarchais' Chérubin, or M. Cousin himself when he wrote his book on the Duchesse de

Longueville. Was it Goethe who said that, "When a great man has a dark corner in him, it is terribly dark"? Whosoever said it gave the key to the enigma of the many *mésalliances* —legalised or the reverse—contracted by men of genius. Renan's dark corner, like that of Michelet and others, especially Frenchmen, contained the radiant image of some physically perfect, albeit wholly imaginary woman, or perhaps of that playmate of his infancy, of that Noémi after whom he named his daughter, and who became more and more beautiful as she grew up, until at twenty-two she was a miracle of loveliness, of that Noémi, "qui mourut vierge, qui mourut d'être trop belle." Most of us remember the words of Don Gomez to Doña Sol in *Hernani*:—

> "On n'est pas maître
> De soi-même, amoureux comme je suis de toi.
> . . . . . .
> . . . Dérision, que cet amour boiteux,
> Qui nous remet au cœur tant d'ivresse et de flamme,
> *Ait oublié le corps en rajeunissant l'âme!*"

Personally, we can hear Renan address the lines to some beauteous creature of his own imagination, and the only error in his literary and philosophical career is explained to us. "Il desir vive, e la speranza è morta," sighs Petrarch.

More pleasant is it to turn to the Renan of our daily observation—to the Renan with the dark corner as yet undiscovered by his most intimate

friends, with the dark corner as yet unsuspected by himself; to Renan the wizard, who, though cursed with nearly every physical disadvantage, cast an irresistible spell over every one with whom he came in contact; to the Renan who flung pearls of philosophy into your wine as you sat opposite to him at table, who never said a harsh word, even about his most persistent detractors. "Je respecte tout le monde, même Challemel-Lacour, comme je respecte ma goutte."

He prided himself upon having never contradicted any one, except on one occasion, when he was a young man. He loved to tell this story, and no one, perhaps, was fonder of hearing it told than M. Jules Simon, the very victim of that only instance of contradiction on Renan's part. It happened long ago, when Jules Simon —whose real name is Suisse—was canvassing the Arrondissement of Lannion. The candidate for Parliamentary honours held a meeting at the Mairie of Tréguier, and among the audience there was a student of theology from the Petit Séminaire, who kept persistently "heckling" the speaker without, however, disconcerting him in the least. Unfortunately, the *régent* of the college, who happened to be a Liberal, was present also. When the young *séminariste*, rather elated with his doings, entered the class-room after the meeting, his tutor stopped his further progress, and

flung, as was the custom in those days, a Latin distich at his head—"'Culpa trahit culpam, post culpam culpa revertit, Et post tot culpas cogeris ire foras!'" he exclaimed; then added, "You'll copy the original text and translation twenty times before you go to bed to-night." "And the answer, too, if you wish," said the young fellow, without a moment's hesitation. "Pinta trahit pintam, post pintam pinta revertit, Et post tot pintas nascitur ebrietas." Jules Simon lost his election, and Renan won his *pensum*. When the latter had become famous, and the former one degree less than famous, they happened to be at the same time at Tréguier. Simon paid a visit to the Seminary, and came upon Renan in the very class-room where he had sat as a lad. Simon kept bending over the forms, evidently examining them carefully.

"What are you looking for?" asked Renan.

"I am looking for your name on the forms," was the answer.

"Mon cher ami," remarked Renan; "je n'ai jamais égratigné un banc, ni un camarade. Ça n'entre pas dans mon tempérament, de donner des coups de canif."

But between "slashing" a friend and innocently mimicking his peculiarities of speech, manner, and gait, there was a wide difference in Renan's opinion. These imitations were never premeditated, they were the accompaniment to

some story, told in such a way as to breed the conviction that Heine was right when he said, "All Frenchmen are actors; the worst are often on the stage." I have frequently heard and seen Fusier, who, with all due deference to MM. Coquelin *aîné* and *cadet*, towers a head and shoulders above both as an "entertainer," or to use the French expression, "*diseur*." I have never met with his equal except once, and that was when I saw Mr. Corney Grain. Well, in spite of the structural and facial disabilities under which he laboured, Renan, as a *raconteur*, was as good as either of these. I have already said that those imitations were never premeditated, but the accompaniment to some story. To most Englishmen and Americans, even to travelled Englishmen and Americans, the name of Emile Egger conveys little or nothing, though Egger was a great man in his way. To get at a true estimate of his value, we should have to go to Oxford and consult Professor Max Müller; for my present purpose it is sufficient to state that Emile Egger was one of Renan's dearest friends, an eminent philologist, and the man to whom Renan by preference entrusted his MSS. to read before he confided them to the printer. Utterly unlike Renan physically, intellectually, and morally; the only trait these two had in common was their unvarying kindness to the poor and lowly, their readiness

to make smooth the thorny path of the serious student. Egger, in spite of his great abilities, was very retiring, almost shy, consequently not fond of society, moreover, very simple in his domestic arrangements. In the heyday of the Second Empire he received an invitation to Compiègne. I have given elsewhere a lengthy sketch of the festivities at Compiègne, so I need not repeat it here. His friends had told the savant that, though everything was most lavishly provided, and the attendance perfect, it was the custom to take a servant of one's own, both for the sake of appearance and to lighten the burden of the Imperial *personnel*, which was often driven out of their wits by the plethora of guests. We may be certain that the second reason had more weight with the simple-minded gentleman than the first, and finally induced him to engage a temporary man-servant on the recommendation of one of his neighbours, for it need scarcely be said that he had none of his own. Egger was poor all his life, and but for the windfall of a thousand pounds, left to him by a fellow-student whom he nursed for many years, till the day of his (the friend's) death, he would not have been able to marry; though he was in utter ignorance of his friend's resources, being under the impression that his parents made him a small allowance.

On the day appointed, a magnificent young

fellow, with jet-black hair and eyes like carbuncles, presents himself, and Egger, struck by his appearance, engages him there and then, congratulating himself on having found so prepossessing a personal attendant, "who," he says mentally, "will compare favourably with any one of the domestic staff at Court." But as there is no accommodation in the savant's modest home for the new-comer, it is arranged that he shall enter upon his duties the next day only, the day on which Egger is to start for Compiègne.

Behold the two fairly settled in the apartment allotted to them in the Imperial château, Egger somewhat uncomfortable in his new character of a master who has not the slightest use for a valet, and, moreover, wondering uneasily at the accent of the latter, which, in the hurry of the previous day's interview, he had mistaken for that of a Provençal. At last, unable to hold out any longer, he begins questioning the young fellow.

"Tell me, my lad," he says benevolently, "are you a Frenchman?"

"No, monsieur, I am not a Frenchman," is the answer.

"What nationality are you?"

"I am an Italian, monsieur."

"I forgot to mention," said Renan, when he told us, or rather enacted the story—for it really amounted to that—"I forgot to mention that

this happened in 1858, consequently but a few months after the attempt on the Emperor's life in the Rue Le Peletier, so you may imagine Egger's terror," and forthwith, and without the least effort, we had an imitation of the great Greek scholar, which those who knew him well voted perfect. "'Great God!' says Egger to himself,'"—I am quoting Renan textually—"'Great God, what have I done? Here am I, a member of the Institute, a member of the Legion of Honour, a professor at one of the State colleges, an honoured guest of the sovereign—here am I introducing an Italian into the palace, an Italian against whose appearance not a word can be said, but who may be, for all I know, a second Orsini or Pianori, who entered my service in order to carry out his fell designs upon Napoleon.'"

The upshot of all this was that Egger did not get a wink of sleep during the whole of his stay at the château, lest his valet should murder the Emperor. The savant lay trembling in his bed, listening for every sound, and every now and then rising to take a peep along the corridors, going as far as the Italian's resting-place in his dressing-room, opening the door softly, taking a peep at him by the light of the flickering candle, and then softly stealing to his bed, but not to rest.

No words of mine could, however, convey the scene as enacted by Renan. It was a treat for which his friends clamoured on all occasions, and

which was rarely refused, for I honestly believe that Renan was prouder of his mimic talents than of all his philological attainments put together. One evening he got more than usually excited over the scene, and in his excitement snatched the cruet frame from the table in order to represent Egger carrying a dark lantern, though there was not the slightest evidence that Egger had such an article at hand.

It was upon the whole a great performance—I cannot give it another name—and according to those who knew Egger better than I did—I only saw him twice in my life—a masterly reproduction of all his peculiarities of diction, of accent, of gait, &c., &c. And, I repeat, there was a wonderful difference physically between Egger and Renan, though not so great as the contrast between Renan and Labiche, whom I saw him imitate on another occasion. The playwright was tall, with a face the skin of which seemed drawn so tight over the bones as to make people wonder at his being able to shut his eyes and mouth at the same time; the philosopher was short and squat, with a gait which reminded one unconsciously of the hippopotamus, or, to put it mildly, of a bear, and a face the angles of which were hidden beneath layers of flesh, while the nose looked, not like an integral part of the whole, but like an excrescence on it; "a contemptuously lavish afterthought of nature," as some one said. And yet I have heard Renan

imitate the author of *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* (A Wedding-March) and *Les Petits Oiseaux* (a Pair of Spectacles) to such perfection that with one's eyes shut one could not have told the one from the other. Labiche, as is well known, was elected to the chair left vacant at the Académie by Silvestre de Sacy, also a friend of Renan. The eulogy of such a predecessor, of a writer of whom Thiers said, "C'est lui qui écrit le mieux," must have been a difficult task to a man who, as a boy, was dismissed from the Lycée Bourbon as "hopelessly incapable;" who, by his own confession, was not *une bête à concours* (literally "a prize-competing animal"); whose master, in order to keep him quiet, repeated constantly—"Monsieur Labiche, ne faites pas de bruit, et l'on ne vous demandera ni devoirs, ni leçons."

Under the circumstances the great farce-writer hit upon the idea of consulting Renan, whose admiration for Silvestre de Sacy was well known. The interview must have been satisfactory to both parties, for Renan averred afterwards that he had never enjoyed anything so much in his life. But he was commendably silent with regard to the details, and would not admit that he had given Labiche any active aid in the composition of his speech. Subsequent events, however, nay, his own story, went far to prove that such aid must have been given, seeing that the discourse was voted

a masterpiece by every one. If reticent, however, with regard to the first interview with Labiche, he was perfectly willing to communicate the particulars of the second, at which the Academician elect read his speech, not only to the suspected author of it, but to three more future fellow-members, namely, the Duc d'Aumale, M. Gaston Boissier, and M. Henri Martin, the historian. "I shall never forget the faces of the Duc and Martin as they watched Labiche glibly delivering his sentences," said Renan one evening, and forthwith we heard the encouraging "Très bien" of the author of *l'Histoire du Grand Condé*, and the more reserved "Pas mal" of Martin, reproduced in a way that set the whole room in a roar. When the laughter had subsided, Renan went on: "As for Labiche himself, he kept winking one eye, as was his wont, at me, until I felt very uncomfortable, and at last I took the bull by the horns. 'Monsieur Labiche,' I said, 'all this is positively admirable; I was not aware that you had devoted so much time to the study of the higher sciences.' Thereupon there was another wink, more significant than all the preceding; and he replied, 'Monsieur, le soleil n'est jamais pâle; quelquefois seulement il est voilé.' They were the very words I had used once in an address to the boys at Louis-le-Grand. Then he added, 'You remember what that old

savant Babinet said:[1] "It happens now and then that you go to one of the eating-houses at the *barrière* and you ask for a rabbit. You feel positive that they are going to give you cat, don't you? In fact, you reckon upon their giving you cat. Well, they don't give you cat at all; they give you rat." The Académie is asking me for rabbit in the matter of this speech, and the members are positive, thoroughly convinced that I am going to give them cat. Well, I am not going to give them cat at all; I am going to give them hare. As I have had the honour of telling you already, the sun himself is never dim, only now and then there is a veil across.' And Labiche triumphantly put his MS. in his pocket, while for several minutes we sat staring at him, amazed at his *aplomb;* then we simply choked with laughter."[2]

It was not so much the story as the manner of telling it which fascinated the listener, and yet, as a rule, Rénan made a very sparing use of gesture. His favourite attitude was one of absolute repose: his two podgy hands crossed on the abdomen, his left leg stretched at full length, showing between the bottom of the trousers and the very capacious shoes the strip

[1] Jacques Babinet, who did more for the popularising of science in France than any one before him.

[2] I have translated Labiche's words for the better convenience of the reader.

of black stocking which he never seemed tired of contemplating. Black stockings are rarely worn by Frenchmen so little addicted to fashion as was Renan, though, as a matter of course, the Catholic clergy never wear any other, which caused Renan to remark every now and then, "C'est tout ce qui reste du prêtre." For once, in a way, he was utterly mistaken; for he had remained the typical priest from head to foot, in everything but the dress, much more, in fact, than the priest who died nearly eighty years before him in the self-same room where he breathed his last. I am referring to the Abbé Delille, who lived for many years in London, about whom we ought to know a good deal, and about whom we scarcely know anything. Jacques Delille did not fling his cassock away as did Renan; he put it on a shelf until the revolutionary hurricane had subsided. Meanwhile he selected for himself a "niece," who was so disagreeable and ignorant as to draw forth Rivarol's remark — "Puisque vous avez choisi votre nièce, vous auriez pu la mieux choisir." The "niece" did not think the "alleged blood relationship" a sufficiently strong guarantee against the possibility of being ousted by another "niece," and made Delille marry her. Then she donned the breeches, or, what was tantamount to it, prevented her husband wearing them until he had completed his daily task of thirty lines of

verse, paid for by Michaud, the Paris publisher, at the rate of six francs a line, plus thirty sous for the lady. Then, and then only, was the garment restored to the hen-pecked Abbé. The lady, furthermore, had a habit of flinging books at her husband's head, generally quartos. Delille's protest against that playful kind of endearment was only a qualified one. "Madame," he said one morning in the presence of Chateaubriand or Malouet, "ne pourriez-vous vous contenter d'un in-octavo." Well, I feel convinced that at the appearance of *Vie de Jésus* there were thousands of Frenchmen, laymen as well as priests, and that there are thousands of Frenchmen now, who would have tolerated, and would still tolerate, a Delille who never questioned the truth of the Christian dogma, a Delille with the niece, but who would not tolerate a Renan with a wife. "Le malheur de M. Renan est d'avoir conservé du prêtre la chasteté et non la foi. J'eusse préféré la contraire pour lui"—thus wrote an influential French journalist a few years ago in the most widely-read French newspaper. I do not know whether Renan saw the article, but a couple of weeks later that journalist had his answer, though indirectly. Speaking of the criticisms in general which a new book had brought forth, Renan said, "Je ne m'étonne plus de rien, en fait d'exégèse, Gavroche a la prétention d'en savoir plus que moi."

And when Renan had uttered the word "Gavroche," he had practically exhausted his vocabulary of contempt. For, unlike Victor Hugo, he refused to look upon Gavroche as a hero; he had seen him at work in '48, on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th December 1851, and on several minor occasions. His *Caliban*, which is worth studying as well as reading, is only another kind of Gavroche. If Renan had lived long enough, we might have had "The Book of Gavroches," as we have "The Book of Snobs," for the Pressensés and Peyrats, and others whom it would take too long to name here, were just as much Gavroches to him as if their nether garments had not held together, and their chief claim to fame had consisted of a performance on a barricade with a rusty rifle. "Il y a des gens qui font de Dieu leur raison sociale, comme il y a des courtiers marrons, qui cherchent dans 'Hozier,' des noms titrés pour les mettre à leurs en-tête. Avec ces gens là on ne discute pas; autant vaut payer son avocat pour poursuivre l'homme d'affaires véreux qui vous a volé." This was the bitterest expression I ever heard him use. That was Renan at his worst; to see him at his best, one had to see him after a good dinner—for Renan was somewhat of a *gourmand* as well as *gourmet*—talking to a pretty woman in the cosy nook of a drawing-room, his left hand travelling slowly every now and then to his

chin, his eyes partly closed, listening with the gravity of a *directeur*—not of a confessor, for there is a wide difference between the two—to the semi-sentimental, semi-worldly confidences of his fair interlocutor. I have got an idea that Renan guessed more secrets than were ever confided to half-a-dozen of the most worldly *préfets de police* during the most "festive" days of the Second Empire, which is not saying little. I am speaking of the days before *l'Abbesse de Jouarre*.

Lamartine's niece, the clever Madame de Pierreclos, said one day of Littré, "C'est un saint qui ne croit pas en Dieu." A woman might even write such a sentence, a man may scarcely say it. But, truth to tell, I never troubled much about Renan's belief, for it would have made no difference to mine. I have often heard him talk of life, and of the mysteries surrounding death, and am bound to confess that after each conversation I was as much at sea as ever with regard to Renan's view of that one secret we all would like to fathom; but I did not trouble. I remembered the story of that successor of Quasimodo who shows the towers of Nôtre-Dame to strangers. One day he invited one of his friends to sup with him on the topmost landing. The host talked and ate a good deal; his guest felt his head whirling round, and could not swallow a morsel. "A bon entendeur, salut."

Among the many celebrities who were on intimate terms with my uncles was Paul de Kock, the real French Dickens, though he fell short of the genius of the Englishman. He was virtually, though not nominally, a countryman of theirs, and their admiration of him was distinctly influenced by the fact. For though my uncles were capable judges in literary matters, they could see no faults in their friend's works. Every new volume that appeared was carefully bound and added to their collection. But though these books were within my reach, and I was never forbidden to read them, I was at least sixteen or seventeen before I thought of doing so, and then only in consequence of an accidental conversation with a lad of my own age. He was cousin to a young Dutch girl who was within an ace of becoming the wife of Théodore Barrière, about whom I shall probably have to say something by and by. For once, in a way, my gossip, if it be not amusing, may be instructive, that is, if by chatting about one of the best playwrights France has produced during the nineteenth century, I can induce English adapters to try their hand at some of his pieces.

To return to my theme. Paul de Kock came to my uncles' two or three times a week. They had known his father's brother, who was some time Minister of the Interior in Holland. Paul de Kock's father perished on the scaffold during

the Reign of Terror, the wealthy Dutch banker having been denounced as a foreign spy and an agent of Pitt. One day my young friend entered our apartment as the novelist was leaving it. De Kock was very fond of young people, and he bowed to my visitor with that old-fashioned, high-bred, grave courtesy that belonged formerly to the French middle classes, as well as to the French aristocracy, but the traces of which it is very difficult to find among the *bourgeoisie* of the Third Republic. Flattered by the dapper, well-dressed gentleman's notice—for Paul de Kock was scarcely above the middle height, and always looked as neat as a new pin—my young comrade, with the curiosity of a somewhat precocious stripling, asked me his name. "That," I answered, "is M. Paul de Kock." "The father of the clever novelist of that name?" remarked my companion interrogatively. "No," I said; "his son's name is Henri de Kock, he is a novelist too." "I know that; and the gentleman who went out just now is his grandfather?" persisted my interlocutor. "Not at all; the gentleman who went out just now is M. Paul de Kock, *the* novelist. His father's name was Conrad de Kock, and he was beheaded during the First Revolution." "Do you mean to say that the nice, elderly-looking gentleman whom I met at your door is the writer of all these funny stories?" "I don't know about the stories being

funny; I have never read them, but if they are funny, he is the man who wrote them." "Well, then, all I can say is this, he must have got some one to write them for him, for he does not look as if he had an ounce of fun or humour in him."

Such was the first impression M. Paul de Kock invariably produced upon people much older and much more observant than my companion. Only those who knew De Kock intimately ever caught a glimpse of that *vis comica* which set, and still sets, thousands of readers throughout the civilised world screaming with laughter. It need not be said that a lad of my age could not have been very intimate with a sexagenarian not belonging to his family, and who was, moreover, very reserved in ordinary company. That was the reason why his books had had no attraction for me. I judged very much by the outside of men and things then. Alfred de Musset, whom I saw at my uncles' once; Mario, who was a constant visitor when in Paris; Théodore Barrière, whom we met at the Café des Variétés—for my uncles took me thither with them in the daytime; Alexandre Dumas the elder, who appeared and disappeared like a meteor—these were my heroes; while Joseph Méry, of whom Englishmen have scarcely heard, but whose every line should be translated for them, was my "jester in ordinary." Paul de Kock was simply a kind elderly gentleman—

for he was kindness itself, and the constant purveyor of seats for the theatres, big and small, whom I liked very much, but who in no way struck me as the ideal *romancier*, as I conceived the *romancier* then. Faultlessly dressed, generally in a *café-au-lait* overcoat and light trousers, dazzlingly white linen and blue bird's-eye cravat, his hair and narrow side-whiskers carefully trimmed—I have a suspicion the latter were curled—somewhat corpulent and by no means tall, there was a difficulty of picturing that man's "eye in fine frenzy rolling;" in fact, I feel convinced it never did roll in that manner, though later on in life I have often seen it dance with mirth. But even in his most expansive moments there was a tinge of sadness in his smile. People said that it was the recollection of his father's terrible death which ever and anon obtruded itself upon his thoughts, but I fancy this was a mere theory. In spite of his great success, nay because of that great success, Paul de Kock, from the moment I was capable of forming an opinion on such matters, seemed to me a disappointed man. The silence of the critics must have been a bitter drop in his brimful cup of happiness. His first book was written when he was barely seventeen, and was, from the publisher's view, a success. Next to the elder Dumas, he was the most voluminous writer of fiction France has had during the nineteenth century, not a single book

of his ever proved a financial failure; but "criticism" passed superciliously by, disdaining to blame or to praise. At a rough guess, I should compute Paul de Kock's literary baggage at over four hundred plays and novels, exclusive of the short stories. For over fifty-five years he kept the whole of France in a constant roar of laughter; a protracted and laborious search might unearth about a dozen criticisms worthy of the name. That, in my opinion, was the principal cause of Paul de Kock's carefully suppressed melancholy.

And yet, those who watched the man and who, to use the French expression, "know their Paris"—I am putting the verb in the present tense purposely, for the Paris of which Paul de Kock treated has to a considerable extent remained stationary, morally and mentally, though not materially—I repeat, those who watched the man and had the opportunity of comparing his portraits and groups with the originals must have surely come to the conclusion that it required no small amount of skill to paint those *petits bourgeois* and *bourgeoises* in their habit as they lived. Whenever I think of the injustice done to Paul de Kock by those who, from a creative, if not from a literary point of view, were not fit to stand in his shadow, I am always reminded of two anecdotes, one of which may not be absolutely new to English readers, but both of which

will bear repeating for the sake of the admirable lesson they convey.

The first sight of Mount Lebanon produced such an effect on Lamartine that there and then he improvised an admirable description of the scene, face to face with the scene itself. One of his companions, a young officer, could not help remarking: "But, Monsieur de Lamartine, where do you see all you describe? I fail to perceive a single thing of what you describe." "I can understand that," was the answer; "I look with the eyes of a poet; you with the eyes of a staff-officer."

When Turner had finished his picture of "Covent Garden," he invited a friend of his, a lady, to come and see it. "It's no doubt very fine, Mr. Turner," was the comment, after a little while, "I also have been to Covent Garden, but I am unable to see it in that light." "Don't you wish you could, Madam?" growled the painter with a savage smile.

Although Paul de Kock liked the country, he was as often in Paris as at Romainville, where he had bought a modest estate, which on the first day of the week during the summer months became the rendezvous of many sincere friends, the "bigwigs of criticism" being, however, conspicuous by their absence. I doubt whether it would have been possible to dislike the popular novelist as a man, or the man as a novelist; but

it was, perhaps, equally impossible to enjoy the hospitality of the one without noticing the works of the other; and as these high and mighty critics were determined to ignore the books, they were perforce compelled to abstain from visiting their author. I fancy they would have done the same with Jan Steen, Adriaan Brouwer, Franz Halls, Gerard Douw, and Van Ostade, if they had happened to wield the pen in the days of those worthies. On the other hand, Paul de Kock, after a certain time, probably ceased to invite them, lest his invitations should be construed into a bribe. The critics were the losers, for apart from the thoroughly pleasant entertainment provided by the host and hostess, they might have witnessed the "genesis" of a couple of amusing chapters, nay, of the whole of a novel when, after dinner, Paul de Kock took his guests to one of the open-air balls in the neighbourhood. The novelist had, moreover, built a small theatre, on which he tried his pieces before submitting them to theatrical managers.

Towards the latter end of his life, when I was no longer a thoughtless lad, I often witnessed a "genesis" of that kind when standing by his side at the window of the small apartment he occupied for more than forty years on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, a few doors from the theatre of that name. He would stand motionless for a long while, steadfastly looking at the busy scene

below, through his old-fashioned pearl-handled *lorgnon*, without uttering a syllable; then would turn round and say, "Ça y est, j'ai ce qu'il me faut." As a matter of course, I had seen nothing remarkable about the chaffering noisy crowd, and one day I told him so. "C'est bien probable, mais vous ne voyez pas comme moi;" he replied one day. "Un Bichat ou un Cuvier ne voit dans un Napoléon ou un Cromwell qu'un animal vertébré, le romancier ou l'historien y trouve soit un héros soit un grand criminel; l'inexpérience a aussi ses Bichats et ses Cuviers." It was on that day that I told him the story of Turner, and he in his turn told me the well-known story of Lamartine. He wound up by paying me a compliment: "D'après ce que vous m'avez dit, mon ami, vous y verrez clair assez tôt pour votre bonheur." He stopped for a moment, then clenched the whole. "Après tout," he sighed; "il n'y a que deux manières d'envisager le monde; c'est de le traiter en asperge ou en artichaut, de chercher la tête ou le cœur des gens. Moi je cherche le cœur." I do not think that the critics who ignored him so persistently could have formulated a better philosophy in fewer words.

Those who were familiar with the novelist's habits, were enabled to guess without difficulty the mood that would preside at the day's work by glancing at his attire. The white serge

monk's frock of Balzac has become legendary; Alexandre Dumas, the elder, mostly worked with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and with the collar of that garment unfastened; Auber frequently composed with his hat on; Horace Vernet, who looked like the trimmest of cavalry officers outdoors and in society, would have willingly done without clothing at all while painting, but, to use his own words, "donned a pair of trousers and shirt, as a concession to decency." The famous battle painter, who was physical and moral courage and energy personified, who read Nicholas I. one of the severest lessons a monarch ever received from a humbler mortal, painted as he would have fought; consequently, after an hour or so, the shirt became dripping wet. Eugène Delacroix, a thorough man of the world, and exceedingly careful of his appearance when abroad, was more than slovenly when at home. An old jacket buttoned up to the chin, a large muffler round his neck, a cloth cap pulled over his ears, and a pair of thick felt slippers made up his usual garb in his studio. A chronic affection of the throat and an extreme sensitiveness to cold scarcely justified this utter disregard of appearances; in common fairness, however, it should be said that Delacroix never professed "to make a show," either of himself, his work, or his studio. Though he was "at home" from three till five to visitors of both sexes, it was dis-

tinctly understood that he would not interrupt his work, or play the host in the sense of the popular painter of to-day. Paul Delaroche wore a blouse when at work; and Ingres, until he became "a society man," which was very late in life, always wore a dressing-gown. Scribe, like Buffon, who sat down to his table in lace ruffles and frilled shirt, dressed very carefully early in the morning, and had only to take up his hat when his self-allotted task was done. All these men, though, and several others whom I could mention, never departed from the custom once adopted: their dress did not vary with the nature of their work. Whether the subject they treated was a playful or a tragic one, their attire underwent no modification. Different was it with Paul de Kock. When engaged upon a serious chapter—I use the word serious in the comparative sense—he never failed to "get into" a blue frock coat of military cut, and ornamented with frogs—a coat such as was still worn within my recollection by some of the veterans of the First Empire when in *mufti*. When the subject had to be treated in the lighter vein, he wrapped himself in a blue flannel dressing-gown, and jauntily poised an elaborately embroidered smoking-cap with a marvellous golden tassel on his head. My uncles told me that during the composition of *L'homme aux trois Culottes*—the only political novel De Kock wrote—the last-mentioned articles entirely

disappeared. A couple of years since, while at Monte Carlo, I was reminded of this attempt of the novelist to suit his attire to the business in hand by the remark of an old acquaintance, a former *croupier*, who was then discharging the duties of superintendent of the rooms. While we were chatting together, an old gentleman, faultlessly dressed in the fashion of a quarter of a century ago, made his appearance. "Voilà, Monsieur X. . . ., qui va jouer," said my interlocutor, glancing at the new-comer, whose name I have suppressed purposely, seeing that it is an historic one, and that the bearer of it may still be alive.

"A quoi voyez vous cela?" I asked, somewhat surprised. "Rien qu'à le voir, on dirait qu'il joue tous les jours."

"Non-pas," was the answer; "il ne joue pas tous les jours; il s'écoule même des semaines sans qu'il joue."

"Donc, je répéte ma question: A quoi voyez vous qu'il va jouer aujourd'hui?"

"C'est qu'il a mis son frac, sa belle cravate, ses bottines vernies et tout le reste. Il ne s'habille comme ça que quand il a de l'argent pour jouer; quand il est à sec il vient en veston ou en jaquette. Il vient à l'assaut de la banque en grande tenue."

I have already said that Paul de Kock's apartment in Paris was small to a degree—I might have said uncomfortably small; but in virtue of its situation, it constituted an admirable watch-

tower, for the Boulevard St. Martin was to the Quartier du Marais what the Boulevard des Italiens was, and to a certain extent still is, to the Chaussée d'Antin and the Faubourg St. Honoré—its playground and promenade. That was probably the reason of the novelist's remaining there to the last. There were only two rooms looking on to the street, the drawing-room and a small bedroom; the latter did duty at the same time as a study. A description of the drawing-room would baffle a more skilled pen than mine, just because it was the absolute counterpart of a hundred similar ones I saw in those days. Mahogany chairs, upholstered in red material, arranged methodically along the walls; a couple of Voltaires (read, easy chairs) standing sentry by the fireplace; red curtains at the windows; a gilt clock and candelabra on the mantel-shelf; a table standing in the centre of a carpet—which gave one the impression of an oasis of worsted in a wilderness of waxed flooring—on the table a cellaret which would probably fetch a long price at present, but the like of which in those days could be bought by the dozen. A few engravings and two or three pictures, by no means masterpieces, completed the furniture.

More interesting was the study and bedroom in one. If the drawing-room was like a hundred others, the study was unlike that of any literary

man I knew or know. To begin with; there was absolutely no litter, and the mahogany writing-table, placed by the side of the window, which was left free of access, was the smallest I have seen under similar conditions. There were no stray papers, no dictionaries, nor books of reference of any kind; a large white earthenware inkstand—I have got its twin-brother, left to me by my uncles; a *sous-main*, which must not be confounded with a modern blotter, for Paul de Kock clung to the old-fashioned method of drying his manuscript with sand, a capacious wooden bowl filled with which flanked the inkstand; a few steel pens in primitive holders; a quire or so of quarto paper; and that was all. Paper-weights, letter-clips, and the paraphernalia of the luxuriously appointed sanctum of the well-to-do author were conspicuous by their absence.

The principal feature of the long and narrow room was a set of book-shelves made of plain deal, that had either been stained originally, or become darkened with age. At a rough guess, they contained between 400 and 500 volumes, three-fourths of which were the author's own works—of course, I mean the various editions of his works, from the cheap piracies, printed in Belgium, which drove him almost mad with grief on account of their terrible printer's errors, to the magnificently bound and handsomely illustrated *édition de luxe*, which drove him nearly

crazy with delight, albeit that pecuniarily he had suffered as much by the publication of the latter as by the publication of the former. A simple walnut bedstead, hung with primitive chintz curtains, a tiny couch and one arm-chair, both upholstered in green morocco, and a wash-hand stand completed the furniture of the apartment in which one of the most laborious and useful of lives was spent, for, in spite of all opinions to the contrary, Paul de Kock's was a useful life, for he did for his contemporaries, and to a certain extent for posterity, what it is given to few men to do. He made them laugh, and the laughter left no bitter after-taste. If proof of this were wanted, it would be found in the two following facts.

In 1835, Emile de Girardin, in answer to an article by Balzac, drew up a rough statement of the marketable value of the then famous authors, whom he divided into five categories. Victor Hugo stood at the head of the list in company with Paul de Kock.

The only man who, besides the author himself, had a complete edition of his works, was not only one of the shrewdest judges of humanity, but one of the best critics of the intrinsic—read, moral—value of books, as distinguished from their literary merits—I am alluding to Giovanni-Maria Mastaï-Ferretti, better known to the world at large as Pope Pius IX.

CHAPTER VI.

A view of French society under the Third Republic—Wanted, a Sebastien Mercier—In default of such an one, the author attempts the task—The author's qualifications—The author's knowledge of most of the present rulers of France—The author's system of getting at the truth—Look for the woman—The absence of the nice female element from the principal thoroughfares—The author takes a walk with an English friend—The lady's antecedents and present position—A remark of M. Edouard Hervé of *Le Soleil*—The author's friend explains the situation—The attitude of the Faubourgs Saint-Germain and Saint-Honoré towards the Republican bigwigs—The women of the Chaussée d'Antin—A scene from Dumas' *Etrangère* in real life—The late General Boulanger and his second daughter—Why the wives of the Republican bigwigs shun the public thoroughfares—A minister's "lady" on the prevalence of Offenbachian music in the Church service—An invitation to a dinner-party—My first impression—The late Emile Perrin on diamonds as heirlooms—A scrap of conversation.

SOME one—I do not remember who—has suggested that a new "Tableau de Paris" might be written every ten years. I quite agree with the suggestion, and I do not even make it an essential condition that the limner of such a word-picture should be a Sebastien Mercier; although there are Paris journalists of the present day to the full as able to accomplish the task as the eighteenth century chronicler. Nevertheless, they seem to shirk it. Perhaps they are wise

in their generation. They are, perhaps, conscious of lacking, not the required talent, but the required impartiality. They are either partisans of one of the fallen dynasties, or else champions of the existing *régime*, and their political tendencies notwithstanding, they are mindful, under the circumstances, of Spinoza's precept—"It is not our duty to praise or to blame, but simply to observe."

I have no such fear with regard to my impartiality, albeit that it has been questioned, not once, but a score of times; the latest onslaught on me only dating from a fortnight ago.[1] I made up my mind long since not to answer such attacks. I have been called "a spy in the pay of Bismarck," and a "canting, hypocritical priest," the latter because they, the assailants, remembered the great Father Prout, one of whose humble successors I was as the Paris correspondent of the *Globe;* I have been called many things. The term "canting, hypocritical priest" was flung at me by Madame Sevérine, who succeeded Jules Vallès as the editor of *Le Cri du Peuple.* If her predecessor, with whom I was on very cordial terms for many years, had been alive, he would have probably told her that my godliness consisted in holding up the right cheek when the left is kissed by a pretty woman, not in holding up

[1] This was written on the 5th February, and I am alluding to a violent attack in *La Liberté* of the 23rd January 1894.

the left when the right is smitten by a man. It was some consolation, though, to be mistaken for Father Prout, even by a Madame Sevérine.

With regard to my other qualifications for giving a comprehensive and at the same time concise view of Paris society in the third decade of the Third Republic, I will say as little as possible. I have known personally most of the men who have lorded it over France during the last twenty-three years; I have known them when they were obscure—and deservedly obscure—adventurers who, with the exception of Gambetta, had not between them a fourth of the talent of Persigny, let alone of Louis Napoleon. I know the means by which they have attained their present positions, I know the women they have taken to their hearts and homes—perhaps a little too well—and I mean to speak out freely about all. I would warn the reader squeamish in those matters, to put down my book at once. When Joshua the son of Nun sent out spies to view the land, even Jericho, the latter did not apply for information to the careful housewife and mother; they went to Rahab. During the last twenty-five years I have often adopted a similar proceeding. In France, as elsewhere, respectability that drives a gig is exceedingly selfish; more than commonly ignorant; nine times out of ten afraid to open its lips; and downright uninteresting when it does

open them. Non-respectability, especially when it is being driven in a brougham, or when it tools its own mail-phaeton, is not half such a coward; is frequently very sympathetic; nearly always amusing; and not more mendacious than the other. Besides, in France more than in any other country, the axiom first formulated by Marie Stuart's son—for it was he and not a judge who formulated it—"Look for the woman," used to hold good in almost every case. It does not do so now in politics. There is only one instance during the last two decades in which the influence of a woman indirectly provoked a political crisis, and she was not a strange goddess, but a very legitimate spouse; I am alluding to the Duchesse de Magenta. But for his wife Marshal Mac-Mahon would not have gone to the Elysée, and if a less honest man had been there at the time, the Republic would have been strangled at its birth. For its father was neither Adolphe Thiers, nor Jules Favre, nor Gambetta, nor any of the men who usurped power on the 4th September 1870, even more flagrantly than did Louis Napoleon on the morning of the 2nd December 1851, for he, at any rate, had been placed by the "voice of the nation" in the position whence he could usurp power; they had not. The real founder of the Third Republic, the founder in spite of himself, was Mac-Mahon. He will duly figure in my "attempted" picture, which as yet is merely a

blank canvas before me, a canvas before which, remembering what I said about the talent of some of the Paris journalists, I am standing asking myself whether I have the literary skill either to begin or finish it? But at the same time there occurs to me the answer of Machiavelli to that princess who went to consult him about her son. "Whatever he does, he does badly," she sighed. "It is better to do things badly than not to do them at all," was the reply.

The background to my picture does not promise well. I have no groups of well-dressed, fascinating, sprightly women *comme il faut* to incorporate with it. I have only women *comme il en faut*—to use Gautier's expression to Heine—and even of these there is a scarcity. To the man who, like myself, knows every inch of his boulevards from the Rue Scribe to the Rue Drouot, this absence of the nice female element from the principal thoroughfare is a subject of perpetual wonder and regret, and he cannot help remarking upon it to his companion for the time being. Until the year before last, I failed to get a valid, or call it a plausible, explanation of the supposed voluntary exile of the sweeter part of humanity from her customary haunts. It came from a dear old friend, a woman of the world, who is about my own age—that is, no longer young—and who has a catholic sympathy with the foibles, nay, with the vices of mankind, and especially with

those of her own sex. She is English though she speaks French like a native, and has been married twice. Her first husband was one of her countrymen, a naval officer; her second is a Frenchman, the bearer of a name which is virtually a rallying cry among the Republicans, although "the exploit whence sprung the fame" was not performed by him, but by his brother, who died recently. My friend's husband is, however, as sincere a Republican as was his brother, but of a different type. If I could see a Republic with such men as he is at the helm, I would become a Republican myself. Curiously enough, for there are not many women who are Republicans at heart, his wife shares his political convictions to the full. She and her husband remained in Paris during the Commune, and, in spite of the latter's well-known antipathy to everything savouring of violence, were never molested. During that period she was invited on several occasions "to contribute her *pavé* to the making of a barricade," with which invitations she invariably complied graciously. I have said this much about her to show that, intellectually and morally, she is not hostile to a Republican *régime*. But whenever I discuss the subject with her, I am reminded of a remark made to me some years ago by M. Edouard Hervé, the editor of *Le Soleil:* "In every French aristocrat there is the making of a democrat; in every English

democrat there is the basis of an aristocrat." I am bound to say that my friend's republicanism is pretty well shaken off at her front door, and very seldom allowed to invade her home.

On the occasion referred to, I happened to meet her by accident a few hours after my arrival in Paris, and we strolled down the Boulevards Malesherbes and Haussmann as far as the Rue Auber, and from thence to the Place de l'Opéra. It was a mild December day, the sky being somewhat overclouded and the pavement rather damp. Now I am no longer young, but nevertheless a great admirer of a pretty pair of feet and ankles, and on a damp day, "*j'ai la vue basse,*" as M. Francisque Sarcey said once when remonstrated with by a lady whose nether extremities he was scrutinising a little too closely. During our stroll, however, there was nothing to admire in that respect. But for the language spoken around me, I might have been in Berlin or Amsterdam; in these two cities only could I have seen so many pairs of *galoches* outside the shop windows during so short a period. Nor was this all. Though it was the hour at which the Parisienne with nothing particular to do takes her walks abroad, I did not see a dozen well-dressed women. The weather was not sufficiently bad to justify this abstention on her part, and, as a matter of course, I commented upon it. "The Faubourg St. Germain and the Faubourg St. Honoré no

longer take their womankind on to the boulevards of an afternoon," replied my friend. "The men are more or less compelled to come in contact with the new rulers of France, but they object to introduce them to their wives, daughters, and sisters. And it is exceedingly difficult not to introduce them without being downright rude, or, to say the least, impolite, for Louis Napoleon's father was right when he said 'qu'il n'y a pas de laide duchesse pour un bourgeois.' If the partisans of the vanished dynasties were bent merely on fighting against measures instead of bringing back rulers, they might have accomplished the former object long ago by throwing one or two of their salons open to the wire-pullers and the leaders of the various Republican sections, for there is not one of these leaders, with the exceptions of Brisson and Freycinet, the latter of whom is an aristocrat himself, who could not be wheedled into anything by a charming woman belonging to the older or even newer *noblesse.*

"As for the women belonging to the Chaussée d'Antin," my friend went on, "their disappearance from their favourite promenades is due to another cause. A great many are not sufficiently sure of their own social standing not to be afraid of being mistaken for, or being obliged to be introduced to, the wives of some of the present bigwigs. Their husbands, I mean the husbands

from the Chaussée d'Antin, unlike the Legitimists, Monarchists, and Bonapartists, do not mind their spouses coming in contact with the male section of the powers that be, for there is something to be gained by that contact; but they draw the line at their wives' contact with the women, unless they are absolutely driven into a corner; for it has happened before now that the granting of a concession or the signing of a fat contract has been made dependent upon the admission of the wife of a minister or permanent secretary to the *salon* of the wife of a big *brasseur d'affaires*, who, the wife, *petite* and very *petite bourgeoise* as she may have been, considers herself above the *petite ouvrière* or *modiste*. We'll remain within the narrowest bounds, and charitably say — the *petite ouvrière* or *modiste* whom the whirligig of politics has pitchforked into a conspicuous position. You remember that scene in the younger Dumas' *L'Etrangère* in which Mrs. Clarkson offers ever so many thousand francs for a cup of tea in the Duchesse de Sept-Monts' drawing-room? That scene has been enacted over and over again in real life during the past few years; the bribe, of course, not being so many thousands of francs for the poor, but the large concession, the profitable sinecure for a relation, or the fat contract to which I have alluded. You must remember that *la courtisane sur le retour*, *la fille du peuple*, and the rest of the women

of *les nouvelles couches enrichies*—if their mankind be officially connected with the Republic—can no longer take a ticket for a social haven or paradise of some sort *en route* for heaven; that is, they can no longer call the priest to their aid, as they did formerly, by largesse for his flock, or contributions towards a new or restored church. That would jeopardise their husbands' or fathers' position. Boulanger, who had sent his second daughter to a convent when he was a mere general, took her out again when he became Minister for War. Seeing that each of the parties, except the Republican, was hoping, if not deluding itself into the belief, that the General was working for them, they accepted, though not without a wry face, the lame explanation furnished by the General's friends, that the General's altered circumstances would enable him to provide a *dot* for the second daughter as well as for the first. The Republicans themselves, and, for that matter, Boulanger too, knew well enough that with his daughter in a convent he would not have been able to hold office for a month, and at that time they, the Republicans, had not taken the measure of the man, and were not afraid of him, or else he had not taken the measure of the extreme section, and thought that he could throw dust in their eyes by his daughter's return to society. To this argument of mine you may oppose the fact that Madame la Duchesse de Magenta and Madame

Carnot are faithful Catholics and perform the duties of their religion. That may be. I doubt, however, whether a priest ever entered the Elysée during Mac-Mahon's tenancy of the Presidential chair, or if he enters there now except on business. Besides, a President is a President, and the mob and the wire-pullers of the extreme Radical sections cannot hound him away unless he should commit some flagrant breach of the Constitution. Take my word for it, that no minister's wife could edge her way into society by means of the priest without her husband's life being made a burden to him, not only by his Republican opponents, but by his colleagues also."

"But," I observed, "all these *parvenues* may not be able to get into the right set, or what they think to be the right set, or the only set that is at all attainable; still there is no reason why they should voluntarily exile themselves from the streets. Nay, I read the other day in a paper which I feel confident is well informed on the subject, a list of dresses and cloaks, &c., ordered by one of these. They must be shown somewhere, for my own experience tells me that woman—of no matter what nationality—does not order all that finery for the mere pleasure of sitting at home in it."

"You are right," replied my friend, smiling; "they do not sit at home in it; but, I repeat,

they do not come out into the streets, not even in an open carriage, let alone on foot. Of course there are exceptions, but I am talking of the majority. I could tell you of scenes which the Palais-Royal farce-writer would think too extravagant, too far-fetched, to reproduce on the stage, but which nevertheless have occurred not once, but a half-dozen times in real life. I will do so one day; meanwhile let me tell you what does keep them out of the street—the fear of being recognised and accosted by their former companions, acquaintances, and friends, who, if the truth be told, are probably much more creditable than they. But it is not pleasant for a minister's or even an ambassador's wife, however honest in the main her former acquaintances may be, to be hailed by them while she is sitting proudly in a grand carriage with coachman and footman on the box, and while they, the acquaintances, are *en cheveux*, with a large bonnet-box dangling from their hands, or a laundry-basket slung on their arm. 'Tiens,' says the little dressmaker or ironer, 'tiens, viola Phœmie, et en voiture;' and forthwith she steps up to the carriage and claims acquaintance. 'Comment, tu ne me remets pas; tu ne reconnais pas la petite Anna?' says the girl, as the occupant of the carriage gives her a stony stare in response to her salutation; 'tu ne reconnais pas la petite Anna avec qui tu travaillais chez Madame Bronvart?' There is

still no response, and meanwhile a small group has collected, for the girl's last words have been uttered in a somewhat shrill tone. *Badauds, flâneurs* and *désœuvrés* of all kinds instinctively stop, expecting a 'scene'; the group swells into a crowd, but there is no 'scene'; there is only an exposition of a 'scene' that might have been enacted by the offended workgirl, for the footman at a wink from his mistress has told the coachman to drive home; but Madame la Ministre is highly excited, and promises herself not to risk a repetition of the *rencontre.* Within a few days all the servants get notice, for I need not tell you that the 'incident,' '*l'aventure de Madame,*' as it is called by the *valetaille,* has provoked great merriment, not unmixed with spiteful comment in the kitchen, and possibly in the *concierge's* lodge, and that the engagement of a new *personnel* was decided upon that very evening between His Excellency and his spouse. If the thing were possible, the magnificent official residence, 'newly decorated' and sumptuously furnished, would be abandoned, for the *concierge* is to be trusted no more than the rest. But the trouble and expense of such a sudden flitting to the private residence which has been dismantled are too great. As it is, the *ministère* is left for a week or so to the tender mercies of the ushers, during which time another staff of private servants is recruited, if possible from the country. Madame goes to

Dieppe, Étretat, or Cauterets, if in the summer; to Biarritz, Pau, or Monte Carlo, if in the winter; while Monsieur le Ministre takes up his quarters at an hotel. You look incredulous; I can assure you I am not drawing upon my imagination; to my knowledge the thing has happened twice within a twelvemonth. I myself have heard a minister's wife apostrophised from the gallery of a very good theatre while she was seated in a stage box."

"But," I objected, "there are some bigwigs of the Republic whose wives belong to very good families; for instance, Jules Ferry, Floquet, Flourens, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Freycinet, and others."

"True," was the answer; "but wherever that is the case, they receive the wives of their husbands' colleagues only 'officially,' albeit that some of these—I mean the wives—are their equals in point of birth and education. They are bound to do this, else the others would slip in, and their private social gatherings would become the laughing-stock of the nation; for there is always some good-natured *nouvelliste à la main* or *chroniqueur* who, though belonging to the Republican party, is not above making capital out of the *pataqués* and malaprop remarks he hears by selling them embellished to the Opposition papers. This wholesale ostracism of all ministers' wives by one another is largely due

to the bulls and blunders of Madame . . . ,[1] which for the first few years after her appearance in society made the round of the press. Here is one of these unfortunate remarks which has never been published. Some six or seven years ago she took it into her head to attend the Lenten Services at St. Eustache. About the same time there was a successful revival of several of Offenbach's operas, and one or two of the more seriously inclined papers protested against this, on the score that *La Belle Helène*, *La Grande Duchesse*, and the rest had contributed largely to the prevailing corruption during the Second Empire; that after the war, France had faithfully promised herself not to be betrayed into such follies again, and so forth; with all of which remarks the lady cordially agreed. From what I have heard, it would seem that, previous to this sudden fit of religious observance, the lady had not been in a church for years, perhaps not since her 'first communion,' if she was ever confirmed at all, or she may never have set foot in a sacred building in her life; for I have been told, though I do not know how far the story is true, that she was the daughter of a working-man who about '48 loudly professed his Voltairean principles. There is not much harm in that, for every one has the right to think as he likes; the

[1] The name was duly mentioned; at my publisher's request I have suppressed it.

worst is that these working-men, though they read a good deal themselves, rarely impart their knowledge to their female offspring, and simply forbid them to go to mass. The habit of staying away, being once contracted, is rarely changed except under extraordinary circumstances. Anyhow, the lady had no prayer-book on the first day of her devotional pilgrimage, and some one obligingly offered her one. In the afternoon she paid a visit to the wife of another minister, and was in a state of great indignation. Her hostess, as a matter of course, asked the reason. 'It is positively disgraceful,' was the reply; 'they are not content with having the music of that Offenbach here, there, and everywhere, but they must needs introduce it into the Church service.' 'Surely, chère Madame, you are mistaken; I went to Notre-Dame yesterday, but I heard no music of Offenbach,' remarked the hostess. 'That's rather curious,' was the rejoinder, 'for it is marked in the prayer-book they lent me; but perhaps it is a prayer-book intended for St. Eustache only.' 'I fancy there is no such special prayer-book, but I will see in mine; I happen to have a new one,' with which the hostess vanished for a moment, and returned with her prayer-book. 'I cannot find a mention of it anywhere,' she said after a while. 'But here it is, plain enough,' protested her visitor, pointing to three letters printed in italics and brackets in several places. She had

mistaken the abbreviation of the word 'offertory' (Off.) for the name of the popular composer."

I laughed, but knew that my friend, clever as she is, had not invented this. She went on. "When you come to Paris nowadays on a flying visit, you spend too much time in the theatres and the streets. I am having some people to dinner to-morrow. Come and have a look at them. And mind, they are the best, *le dessus du panier de la troisième république;* it will give you an idea of what the lower layers are, and a pretty correct notion about the aspirations of the women especially. Mind, these are the best; it is virtually my husband's nephew's dinner-party, not mine; but his father is strange, and said that he could not have it at his official residence, as he would be compelled to invite the wives of some of the bigwigs of the Chamber, and that I always made a fuss. I don't make a fuss, but I would willingly dispense with the nuisance of doing the honours of his home. If he were not too old, I would advise him to marry again."

"I'll be pleased to come: but the chances are that some of my impressions will eventually find their way into print," I replied.

"You may write whatever you like, provided you mention no names. The reverse of *les grandes dames de par la république*, I object to see my name in print; but I should not be sorry to give my countrymen either vicariously

or personally an insight into the social meaning of the words 'liberty, equality, and fraternity.'"

. . . . . .

My first impression on entering my friend's drawing-room on the following evening was that "I had come in for a good thing." The seven or eight women—exclusive of the hostess—grouped about the apartment were all good-looking; one was positively handsome, two sisters—I discovered the relationship later on—were sweetly pretty, and the rest comely. A glance told me that one and all were dressed literally "regardless of expense and in excellent taste." At a rough guess, the diamonds worn by them must have cost collectively between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds; but there was not a single ornament or jewel but what might have been purchased *séance tenante* at any first-rate shop in the Rue de la Paix or on the Boulevard des Capucines. My friend's old-fashioned garnets and Honiton lace proved a welcome relief; her female guests reminded me of the showroom at Worth's or Pingat's, with this difference, that the *essayeuse* never wears a low dress, and that they, the guests, were sufficiently *décolletées* to damn a dozen Tartuffes. It was an absolute case of "neck or nothing," as the Anglo-Egyptian in the Saïd Pasha time termed it in 1867 at the Tuileries. "Cela sent la parvenue," said Madame de Coislin to Madame de Chateaubriand nearly a hundred

years before that at a similar exhibition in the salons of Madame de Staël and Madame Suard. "Nous autres, femmes de la cour, nous n'avions que deux chemises; on les renouvelait quand elles étaient usées; nous étions vêtues de robes de soie et nous n'avions pas l'air de grisettes comme ces demoiselles de maintenant."

I may admit that the display of diamonds fairly surprised me, and after a few moments I remarked upon them in an undertone to my hostess. "Most of them are heirlooms," she replied with a significant smile; "at any rate, that's what I am told." My friend's smile recalled to my mind a conversation I had one day with the late M. Emile Perrin of the Comédie-Française, whose portrait I intend to give before the end of these pages. In days gone by, the Comedians, male and female, had to provide everything in the way of dresses for themselves, which made Augustine Brohan say one day, "On nous mettait sur la scène toutes nues, il est vrai nous étions assez jolies pour ça." When the clever artist launched that epigram, many things were already paid for by the treasury. At present the management provides even the boots, hats, and bonnets of the actresses in modern as well as costume plays; nay, a laundress—*une blanchisseuse de fin, s'entend*—is attached to the establishment. And everything is of the very best, and thoroughly genuine, with the exception of the paste that still does

duty for diamonds. Talking about the latter on a certain occasion, the late Administrator-General blinked his eyes, as was his habit when he felt in a jocular mood, which by-the-bye was not often.

"It does not matter," he said, "seeing that from one year's end to another the stage jewellery is never used. It is surprising," he added, "how many heirlooms of jewellery there seem to be in actresses' families, for every remark upon the subject invariably elicits the same reply—'Oh, my mother had them long before her marriage.' And yet, to look at these mothers one would hardly think so."

Balzac was right; the whole of the world's stories are founded upon seven originals. If that adventure of Judah with Tamar, as related in Genesis, had not been productive of such a terrible *esclandre*, she would have afterwards averred that that tell-tale ring was an heirloom.

I must remind the reader that this particular visit to Paris occurred at the time when the Panama scandals were reaching the acute stage, when initials, which but too thinly disguised names, freely appeared in almost every newspaper in connection with true or fictitious stories attributing rightly or wrongly a good deal of the spoil to certain women, the "friends" of this or that minister, of this or that highly placed personage. By my hostess' own admission, I was in the society of women who pretended with

more or less reason—I discovered that it was with less reason—"*de faire la pluie et le beau temps*" in the affairs of State, and I naturally concluded that they would be somewhat reluctant to discuss the articles, paragraphs, and apologues in question, which, if they did not aim at them, aimed, at any rate, at those with whom they were known "to row in the same boat." In less than five minutes after my arrival I was thoroughly undeceived on that point, for there was not the slightest reticence on the subject. But a still greater surprise was in store for me. I expected that every one would pretend ignorance with regard to the originals of some of these cleverly drawn portraits, for I had read two or three, and they were decidedly cleverly drawn in spite, or perhaps because, of their want of resemblance; or, in default of the confidence or tact to plead such ignorance, would tax others with being the involuntary models. Not at all. The following scrap of conversation will afford the reader an idea of my second surprise.

"You know," said a *piquante brunette* of about thirty to the handsomest woman in the room,—"you know for whom that portrait in *Le Gaulois* was meant? And you know whose salon they wanted to depict?"

"I have got a faint suspicion to that effect," was the answer, with a magnificent, semi-supercilious smile, showing a splendid set of teeth.

"I fancy I have got a faint suspicion to that effect."

"I am told it is meant for Madame R. . . ."

"For Madame R. . . .? I can assure you that it is not meant for Madame R. . . ."

"Well, I have been positively assured it is."

"You have been thoroughly misinformed, and you may contradict the rumour on my authority. I am furthermore certain that it is Madame R. . . . herself who spreads these rumours. But it cannot be meant for her, seeing that——"

"Seeing that——"

"Seeing that it is meant for me."

"For you?" This in a tone of astonishment and vexation impossible to convey.

"For me. I feel perfectly certain of it, for I happen to know the writer of the article very well."

I repeat, I had read two or three of these articles, and at the time of reading them felt that if any woman in whom I took ever so slight an interest had been held up to obloquy—although exceedingly witty obloquy—in that way, I should have horsewhipped the writer within an inch of his life, or risked being horsewhipped by him. The original of that particular portrait not only felt evidently flattered, but I discovered afterwards that all the others shared the feeling, and that those who had been left in the "satirical cold" could scarcely disguise their

disappointment. The greatest injury that could be done to them had been inflicted: they had been passed over in silence. In the course of the evening, it became clear to me that one might say almost anything of them, provided it was said in print and in a paper that could command a wide circulation. I doubt whether, with the exception of my hostess, one of the women I met that night could have given even a moderately intelligent account of Mme. Roland, Mme. de Sainte-Amaranthe, let alone of Mme. Necker, Mme. de Beauharnais, or Mme. de Genlis. They were unquestionably familiar with the names of Pompadour and Du Barry, with the name of the first in connection with dress fashions and silk stuffs, with that of the second in connection with a certain shade of porcelain; beyond that they knew nothing of their doings or their lives; as for her who for good or evil influenced the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV., she who was mainly responsible for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, but to whom France also owed the foundation of the "Maison de St. Cyr," her name was probably as a Greek word to them. And yet every one of these women, who were and are only the samples of perhaps three or four hundred others, aspired and still aspires to play a *rôle* similar to that played by the women of brain of the eighteenth century. Their failure has been most flagrant, for even Gambetta, the most sus-

ceptible to woman's charms and wiles, of all those who have lorded it over France for the last twenty-three years, was determined to conduct "politics without petticoats." In his case the tussle was perhaps harder than in that of any other leader or subordinate, for reasons which will become sufficiently apparent when I come to deal more fully with him. At present, I may be permitted to "open a parenthesis," *anglicé*, to digress for a while, and to draw upon my earlier recollection, aided, may be, by a little historical knowledge, in order to show what "*la politique sans les femmes*" really means to France.

CHAPTER VII.

Politics without petticoats—Marshal Mac-Mahon and the Duchesse de Magenta—The "friends" of the Republican bigwigs—Mme. Thiers and Mlle. Dosne—Their influence over Thiers—A letter from Mlle. Dosne—Mme. Grévy—Mme. Daniel Wilson, née Grévy—Jules Grévy and Mesdames de Rainneville and d'Harcourt—Mme. Ferry—Mme. de Freycinet and Mlle. de Freycinet—Boulanger and Mme. de Bonnemain—Women who influenced kings—Mme. Edmond Adam and Louise Michel—Political *salons* of former days—More conversation at the dinner-party—My friend's husband on the situation—The reason of the dislike to woman's influence—Corbière's mother and Gambetta's father—Skobeleff and the Jewish soldier—A short retrospect—The modern politician's love-affairs and his way of conducting them.

NEVER, in the history of France, have her public men been exposed to such merciless scrutiny as within the last twenty-three years. Their integrity in political as well as in money matters has been frequently and not altogether unjustly assailed, but no one has ever said or written of them—"This or that one is under the thumb or in the power of a woman whom he cannot or dare not disobey; it is in this or that *alcôve* that he finds or looks for his inspirations." No one has ever been able to say—"France is governed by a ballet-dancer, or by a duchess;" though in one instance a duchess tried for a

very, very little while to get the upper hand. She failed utterly, mainly, perhaps, because the man was too honest, also, probably, because they had been married many, many years, and though the affection subsisting between them was rare and sweet indeed, the glamour of passion had departed; it was the influence of the spouse, but, to use a French expression, of "l'épouse mûrie, ayant laissé son sexe aux aspérités des années; de l'épouse austère, demi-confesseur, demi-belle-mère." I need not mince matters; neither the dead husband nor the living wife have aught to be ashamed of in that episode in their lives. I am alluding to the late Marshal Mac-Mahon and the Duchesse de Magenta.

Of course, there are women who have substantially benefited by their relations, more or less avowable, with the men in power: they have had the first news of important events, which has enabled them to gamble on the Stock Exchange; they have received *pots-de-vin* for securing ministerial influence for a new patent or a new joint-stock company; they have placed their husbands, fathers, and brothers in snug berths; but of political influence they have wielded none—always with the exception of the Duchesse de Magenta just named. They have been on the pirate ship and shared in the spoils and booty; but they had to keep their hands off the helm; they have not been allowed to shape its course. When Mme.

Thiers died, an amateur, who was curious in such matters, offered a comparatively large sum for one of her autograph letters, or for one of her sister, Mlle. Dosné, written during the life of Adolphe Thiers. His main object was to discover whether the wife or the sister-in-law, his almost inseparable companions, had ever influenced his political actions in the slightest degree. Naturally, the dealers, having been put on their mettle, began their hunt, and after a fortnight our amateur received a visit from one of them, who informed him in a very important manner that he had discovered one of the desired documents, which had already been sold during the statesman's life to another amateur, who was, however, willing to part with it for a consideration. The dealer, though, was unable to enlighten him as to the nature of the epistle, but volunteered to put him in communication with its owner. So said, so done. The latter replied most courteously to the request of the intending purchaser, and sent a copy of the note, which consisted of two lines from Mlle. Dosne to the baker: "Monsieur, je vous prie de tenir dorénavant le pain que vous nous fournissez un peu plus cuit." I will return to Madame Thiers and Mlle. Dosne by-and-by, but I may state that the amateur never had a second offer of any kind. Madame Mac-Mahon had her moment of victory when she led the conjugal horse to the water—

read the Elysée—but she failed to make him drink out of the Legitimist pond. Of Madame Jules Grévy, it would be simply ridiculous to speak in connection with political influence; and Grévy's "bosom friend" of many years' standing even before he was President of the Republic, if ever she had the slightest ambition to have a finger in the political pie, saw the futility of such an attempt so clearly that in sheer despair she arranged the marriage of her brother, Daniel Wilson, with Mlle. Alice Grévy. The result of that union is written in letters, the reverse of gold, in the annals of the Third Republic (anno 1887). And though Jules Grévy's eyes sparkled at the charm and fascination of the delightful Madame de Rainneville and the equally fascinating Comtesse d'Harcourt, though he put his hand familiarly and even caressingly on their arms, and called them "*mes belles enfants*," "*mes toutes-belles*," and so forth, neither their charm nor their fascination had sufficient power over him to make him hold his hand when the decree expelling the Orleans princes had to be signed.

Madame Jules Ferry, who is a mild Protestant, and a nice, liberal-minded woman, was unable to prevent her husband from framing and launching the edict against the religious congregations, which edict is better known to the general reader as "l'Article 7." Madame de Freycinet, more austere in her Protestantism, and perhaps not

quite so nice, but sensible withal, failed to persuade her spouse not to lend himself to proscription of any kind; all she could accomplish was to extract a promise from him that he would confine his measure to the Jesuits only; but when he proclaimed that decision at a political meeting at Montauban, the radical mob was nigh tearing him to pieces, and in spite of his wife imploring him to hold firm, to "enact the man," to leave the Jesuits alone as well as the rest, he resigned and gave M. Ferry a free hand. Mlle. de Freycinet, a most accomplished girl, who was for some years her father's private secretary, had become very intimate at the Prince von Hohenlohe's, and sincerely attached to Fraulein von Hohenlohe, the ambassador's daughter. It was even whispered —with how much truth I am not in a position to say—that a marriage was contemplated between the minister's daughter and the ambassador's son. That was enough for a good many of M. de Freycinet's colleagues and their henchmen. They began to throw out hints that all this aristocratic commerce was foreign to the spirit of true Republicanism; that if parents were bent upon patrician husbands or wives for their children, they should not accept dignities and emoluments in a democracy, and so forth. I have already said that the rumours with regard to the alliance may have been utterly without foundation; the friendship between the two young girls was, however,

an ascertained fact, and what was perhaps more to the point, M. de Freycinet was at the time the only Republican minister who, by his courtesy and distinguished manners, had become an unquestioned favourite with the *corps diplomatique*. M. Flourens has been one of his worthy successors in that respect. I know—not from hearsay—that Mgr. de Rende, the present Bishop of Perugia, and perhaps the coming Pope, devoted an hour weekly to a mere friendly call on M. de Freycinet, and that Prince von Hohenlohe paid him frequent visits. I know, furthermore, that in consequence of the cordial relations between the two fathers, if not between the two daughters, some difficult negotiations had been carried on in Berlin with satisfactory results to both Governments. Well, this very fact was made a weapon against M. de Freycinet, and especially against the rumoured marriage which, I repeat once more, may have been at the outset a pure invention on the part of some more than usually imaginative gossiper. Anyhow, the mere rumour was treated as an almost accomplished fact, and produced a formidable, albeit carefully hidden, ferment within ministerial circles. The mildest adjective flung at it in serious comment was that it was "unpatriotic." Less responsible critics went much further. They declared nearly openly that it should be prevented by all means, "because"—I heard the words myself—"Mlle. de Freycinet,

as the private secretary of her father, was in possession of secrets, notably relating to the plan for mobilising the French army, which in the flush of her first happiness she might voluntarily impart to her husband, or which the latter, in default of such voluntary statement, might succeed in 'worming' out of her." I hasten to add that the speaker was officially irresponsible, but he was hand-in-glove with a half-dozen actual and past ministers, and I feel confident that the sentence and the dastardly suspicion it implied was not of his own invention.

The project, if it had any existence at all, came to nought, and the relations between Germany and France towards the latter end of Prince von Hohenlohe's stay in Paris became much more strained than they had been during the previous two or three years; nor was M. de Freycinet's altogether the same towards Germany. In fact, the change was so apparent to me that I pointed it out in the columns of the paper I had the honour to represent at that period, saying, that "*la souris blanche*"—the sobriquet generally applied to M. de Freycinet—"had become *la souris rouge*." The change may have commended itself to M. de Freycinet in order to disarm all further comment and distrust.

I fancy I was right in saying that under the Third Republic the influence of woman in the affairs of State is *nil*. A Fillon under the Third

Republic may organise a traffic in decorations and orders which will develop eventually into a "Caffarel scandal," and have its *dénouement* in the Assize Courts; she cannot raise a Dubois to an archbishopric; there is no room for a Madame de Prie, a Madame de Chateauroux, or a Madame de Pompadour, least of all for a Madame de Polignac. If Boulanger had lived and undertaken the dreamt-of "*revanche* campaign" against Germany,[1] we may be certain that no Madame de Bonnemain would have been allowed to send a map to his headquarters with the strategical positions marked by patches taken from her patch-box, as did Madame de Pompadour on one occasion.

But in this witty France, where, in spite of the Salic law, woman has reigned and governed more effectually than in any country—with the exception of England—where her sex could hold the sceptre legally; in this witty France, the history of which is studded with the clever doings of those exquisite *drôlesses* who henpecked kings, as with sparkling diamonds; in this witty France, which has coined the proverb—"*Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut;*" in this witty France, which can boast of a Joan d'Arc who led armies to victory, as well as condemn an empress who impelled them to their ruin; in this witty France, which numbers among her daughters a Marguerite

[1] I will refer to this more fully by-and-by.

de Valois as well as a Madame de Maintenon, an Adelaide d'Orléans as well as a Du Barry, and among her adopted daughters a Catharine de Medicis and a Duchesse de Berri—I am putting the good and evil geniuses together; in this witty France, where, to say no more than that woman, until recently, enacted the part of the cotton-wool in a case of porcelain, that is, prevented the contents from being smashed; in this witty France, woman, even the least intellectual, is reluctant to abdicate voluntarily her sway. But when the most intellectual—and I have no hesitation in counting Madame Edmond Adam and even Louise Michel, fanatic and *detraquée* as she may be, among the number—see that power dwindling to nothing, it is not very surprising that their less gifted sisters should fashion themselves a semblance of it, and cling to it desperately. With this preface, for which I heartily beg to apologise, I resume for a little while my observations at my friend's dinner-table.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century a *salon* was, before everything, literary. Madame Geoffrin, that charming *bourgeoise* who did not believe in ghosts, but was afraid of them—the reverse of Dr. Johnson, who believed in the ghost of Cock Lane, but was not afraid of it—Madame Geoffrin, that charming *bourgeoise* who corresponded with most of the sovereigns of Europe, cared for nothing but literature, and

hers is in reality the most perfect *salon* on record, not even excluding that of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. To Madame Necker, that very unpleasant, politically pedantic Genevese woman, whom Carlyle has so skilfully drawn with a few words, belongs the credit—if credit it be—of having invented the political *salon*, for the women whom I mentioned but a few moments ago exercised their power without pretending to establish headquarters whence to issue instructions. Madame Necker had many imitators, notably Madame de Genlis, who ostracised Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to make room for Brissot and his friends. Brissot was one of the honest Republicans of 1789, and an able man besides, but just imagine putting the author of *Paul et Virginie* out in the cold to make room for the originator of the Radical or Socialist dogma—"The possession of property means the commission of theft on the part of the proprietor thereof," for there is no doubt that Proudhon was inspired by Brissot when he wrote that famous sentence.

I soon discovered that my female fellow-guests had not an ounce of the brain of Mme. de Staël's mother, or of the former governess of Louis Philippe, but that, nevertheless, they each kept a *salon* whence everything but politics was banished, and where at critical political periods there was a kind of attempt at computing the number of "ayes" and the "noes" the bill of the hour was

likely to obtain. That, it appears, was the chief *raison d'être* of these *salons*. But they arrogated to themselves a rigorous control over the consciences of deputies. When one of these became lukewarm, or was suspected of a tendency that way, his entrance into the apartment was marked by a general and pettily organised silence, accompanied by frowns on the part of the ladies—of which frowns I had a good sample *pour rire*. In the course of the conversation I made a remark to my neighbour at the table—the handsome woman—about the prettiness of one of the two sisters afore-mentioned. "Yes, she is very pretty, but she can be very stern and forbidding when she is annoyed," was the answer. "I should not have thought that so pretty a woman could look anything but pretty and sweet under no matter what circumstances," I protested mildly, half in earnest, half in fun. "Would you like a proof of what I say?" she asked. "I don't mind," I answered, for, after all, the good or bad temper of the lady in question was a matter of profound indifference to me, though on principle, perhaps, I would have done nothing to arouse the latter. "Well, then, listen and watch," she said. As a matter of course, there was no need to tell me twice, and after a few moments my neighbour raised her voice sufficiently to be heard across the table, and for that matter by every one present. "Ma chère," she

began, addressing her *vis-à-vis*, "perhaps you, who know M. D. . . . better than most of us, will be able to tell us why he and M. Edouard Hervé have met so often for the last week?" That was all that was said; but the lady thus addressed looked up, and the scowl on her face reminded me exactly of an ugly, badly mended fracture in a Dresden china figure. I frankly confess that, easily "fetched" as I am by a pretty woman's smile, and little afraid of an ugly or pretty woman's sneers and supercilious stares, I should not have liked to confront that one in her "tantrums."

"That's how they all are," said my host, when next day I gave him the key to the little incident. "My brother, who, you know from his past career, is by no means a coward, avers seriously that he would far sooner face a company of soldiers from the top of a barricade than enter a drawing-room with a dozen of those amiable creatures in it bent upon making him uncomfortable. On the other hand, when they are pleased, they are just as ready to show it. I have been at some of their gatherings when there happened to be among the guests a deputy who on that day or the day before had made a clever speech—or to speak by the card, a speech which the Republican papers had praised as clever, for these would-be critics, I mean the women, are absolutely incapable of discriminating

between sterling and hollow cleverness—or a newly appointed minister or an ambassador. Well, my dear fellow, the most loving husband of the most loving wife on their honeymoon trip is not so pampered or so idiotically worshipped and 'coddled' as such a guest. They don't take their eyes off him; they arrange the pillows on the sofa by their side for him, as if he were made of the thinnest Venetian glass; they offer him their scent-bottles, and their gossamer handkerchiefs to brush the moisture from his brow; their fans are worked with the regularity of a punkah; I have expected every minute that they would offer him a 'shampoo' and a rub down with a coarse bath-towel. 'Just shut that window, please; his Excellency is sitting in a draught.' 'Do open that door a trifle, please, his Excellency will faint with the heat.' In reality, they would not mind his Excellency's fainting in their rooms, for it would give them a paragraph in the papers; nay, the sudden death of one of these great little men would suit their book still better, for that would mean an article of at least a column, and they would be less affected by the loss of the man himself than by the loss of their pet canary or pet dog. These women, my dear friend, never entertain angels unawares.

"Of course, I need scarcely tell you," he went on, "that there are never sufficient 'big pots' at

the same time to go round, apart from the fact that some of the 'big pots' of the last twelve or fourteen years are social savages, and absolutely refuse to be worried into being amiable in or out of the Chamber. Equally, as a matter of course, the greater the difficulty of catching such an one, the greater the glory to the catcher. There is only one exception in that respect; he is never worried or badgered into going to 'receptions;' he is severely left alone; and that is Henri Brisson. One of these women, somewhat more epigrammatic than the rest, said that 'receiving him' entailed too great an outlay of fuel; for he positively chills the whole of the house the moment he sets his foot in it. The next 'big catch' used to be M. Dufaure, who, during his periods of office, went to bed very late, got up at four, and worked like a nigger. He came out of his shell now and then — very rarely, though; consequently his appearance in a *salon* ranked as an event. The men most in demand and cordially responsive to invitations are Edouard Lockroy and Charles Floquet. Lockroy always was, still is, and will probably remain to the end of his days, a delightful companion. Success has smoothed many of the angles of Floquet's character; he can be most amusing when he likes, and he generally does like. As a rule, however, these hostesses have to be content with the

minor gods, and to fall back upon quantity rather than quality."

All this was virtually a comment on the conversation of the previous night, which had nearly exclusively borne on the delight of the ladies at the presence of one or more ministers at their dinner-table.

"What a pity, chère Annie," said a comely woman, who ought to have brought an action for libel against her face, for she looked clever; "what a pity you were unable to dine with us, for we had the *Ministre des beaux-arts.* He was positively charming."

"Really?" drawled another, and by her tone I concluded that she had "something up her sleeve"—the expression is figurative, for there was not sufficient sleeve to conceal anything. "Really——"

"Yes, he was really charming."

"I am not surprised, though; he is nearly always charming. He was very charming at our dinner on Thursday; but I could not pay him the attention I ought to have paid, for we had the *Ministre de l'Interieur* too." The blow had been admirably prepared and was as admirably delivered, for though, as I have said already, quantity has often to do duty for quality in the enumeration of "distinguished" guests, both the quantity and quality enumerated by the last speaker were superior to those of her inter-

locutor; there being ministers of the first and second water; and in that particular set of which I am treating, a Minister of the Interior is to a Minister of Fine Arts, what in music a semibreve is to a crotchet. I might go further still, and say that to a hostess fond of social display, and bent upon showing her importance to the outer world, a Minister of the Interior is worth all the other ministers put together; for the nature of his duties compel him to have "his finger on the pulse of France hourly," as the late M. Beulé, who was Minister of the Interior himself, said one day. As a consequence, the telegrams and reports from the provincial prefects and sub-prefects to the Place Beauveau never cease, and increase as the evening advances. They are, in the absence of the minister from his official residence, despatched to him by the mounted troopers of the municipal guard, and "that is where the sensation comes in." The sight of such a messenger outside a dwelling not only proclaims *urbi et orbi* the fact that the great man is "at meat within," but it secures the reverence of the concierge, who, to most Parisians, but especially to that class, is the "God Almighty viewing things from below," and whose testimony to the grandeur of the tenants' must be as valuable to them as was the approval of that little waitress at the Aërated Bread Shop at the corner of Parliament Street, where canons and deans are

wont to foregather for mid-day refreshment. She had not the remotest idea of their social status, but on my remarking that there were a great many sable-coated gentlemen in the place, she replied—"Oh, yes, they are very respectable and civil; they never make a noise as some of the others do." "The others," I learnt subsequently, were the jaunty clerks of the parliamentary agents and lawyers of the neighbourhood.

France is the most monarchical country in the world, and now that her kings have disappeared, the people—from the highest to the lowest—fashion for themselves kinglets. Whether their names be Comte de Mun, Comte de Douville-Maillefeu, Gambetta, Rochefort, Boulanger, Paul Deroulède, Clemenceau, or Blanqui, their tenure of the tinsel crown and sceptre is very precarious; they are subject to proscription, obloquy, and martyrdom, like real kings. Proscription is, after all, the best thing that can happen to them, for it frequently saves them from obloquy, which is sure to come to them, if they show a dislike to frequently recurring martyrdom. "Après tout, papa ne peut pas se faire coffrer à chaque instant pour plaire à Montmartre et Belleville," said Rochefort's son one day a few years before his sad death.

But for the time being the "kinglet" is adulated as was no king in the feudal age, as is no English lord at a suburban dinner-party or ball. The

lady who had administered the telling blow to her would-be social rival, sat still for a moment or so; then, with a beaming face, she followed up her advantage. "Oui," she remarked, "nous avons eu M. le Ministre de l'Interieur; il a même admirablement diné. Il a repris deux fois de la bisque. Deux fois, deux fois." Madame de Sévigné chronicling the gastronomic feats of "Le Roi-Soleil;" Herr Moritz Busch enumerating the viands despatched by Bismarck, were lukewarm in their enthusiasm compared to that lady. But the minister in question not being, perhaps, such a formidable trencherman as the great king or the great chancellor, the fact of taking "*bisque*" twice acquired additional importance.

These are some of the would-be imitators of the woman who—excepting Louise Michel—is the only one among those of the Third Republic worthy of serious consideration—I mean from a political point of view. It is an open secret, at any rate in France, that Gambetta, who intellectually towered a head and shoulders above any of his successors, proved refractory to the attempt to influence him, though the means employed thereto are probably not so well known, even in France. I may, if space permits, come back to the subject. I intend to state facts, authenticated facts, and not to be beguiled into comment. For the present, I will confine myself to asking a simple question which may already have pre-

sented itself to the reader's mind, and endeavour to supply its answer—of course, according to my own lights.

This is probably the first time that we witness in France the spectacle of politics without the influence of woman. What is the cause of this new departure? One is bound to admit that a monarchy, especially in France, is more favourable than a republic to the influence of woman in the affairs of State; but the First Republic had its remarkable women, not all as great as Madame Roland, but remarkable, nevertheless, and women with whom some of its leaders did not disdain to confer. Then why this startling difference under the Third Republic, though truth compels one to add that the difference was already visible under the Second Republic?

The reason is simply this. The majority of the men who have jumped or been pitchforked into power by a blatant democracy or by the pusillanimity of the *bourgeoisie*, aided by the wilfully impotent recriminations of a physically decadent and morally and mentally stagnant aristocracy — these men, whether they like it or not, do not belong to the class whence, in former days, ministers, ambassadors, and dignitaries were recruited. They may have received the same education, but their home surroundings are different. The lower middle class, whence they sprang, is the least susceptible to

the refined fascination of woman's wit and charms. Of course, there are exceptions in this case, just as there were exceptions in the other —that is, all the ministers, &c., of the Third Republic do not necessarily belong to the lower middle classes, any more than all the ministers, &c., of the First Empire, the Restoration, and the monarchy of Louis Philippe sprang from the upper middle classes. For instance, Corbière, who rose to high dignities under the last two Bourbons, was the son of a poor Breton peasant woman, but the feeling with regard to the choice of ministers and leaders was such that Corbière's mother, on receiving the tidings of his nomination, exclaimed—"My son a minister? Is the Revolution not at an end, then?" As a contrast to this I may cite the remark of Gambetta's father at the period when his son was President of the Chamber, and when he saw him pass between the two rows of soldiers, who presented arms while the drums were beating. "Tant mieux," said the old grocer from Cahors; "it appears that Léon has tumbled into a very good berth. I trust he may keep it and save money." He had no notion of the dignity of the position, he only saw the material benefits accruing from it. He reminds me of the Polish Jewish soldier to whom Skobeleff on the eve of Plevna offered the choice between a hundred roubles and the Cross of St. George for having saved his life.

"The Cross of St. George, the Cross of St. George," said the young man; "what is it worth, the Cross of St. George?" "My good fellow, it is not for the worth of the thing, but for the honour, that I offer it to you. The Cross itself is worth no more than five roubles." "In that case," came the answer, "I'll have the Cross of St. George and ninety-five roubles."

Corbière was, however, not the only one who from lowly beginnings rose to eminence in the State during the first six or seven decades of the century. The Thouvenels, Billaults, Magnes, had no greater advantages at the outset of their lives than the other. Magne, who was the son of poor artisans, won his promotion as a statesman step by step; his great capabilities in financial matters were admitted even by his adversaries, his sterling honesty did the rest. When he had reached the pinnacle of power he took a kind of pride in showing his friends the rough-hewn stone table on which, as a child, he had conned his lessons and written his exercises. It is due to the memory of Napoleon III. to say that he recognised merit, and enlisted it wherever he found it. But, I repeat, all these men had not only served their apprenticeship to the State in subordinate capacities, but that apprenticeship, with its concomitant contact with polite society, had transformed them into "men of the world" of refined

habits and manners; it had, above all, taught them tact; they were more respectful in dealing with the leaders of the Opposition than the present leaders are in dealing with their own followers: consequently, the Opposition was prouder of the ministers it combated than is the present majority of the ministers it supports. Their attitude towards women was altogether different from what it has become. There was far less *empressement* towards them in public, but a more intelligent understanding of the feeling that caused them to fill the galleries of the Palais-Bourbon and the *salle des séances* over the Cour de Caulaincourt — where the Imperial stables were situated—at the Tuileries. In one word, the politicians of to-day do not look upon woman nor love her as did the statesmen of old. They feel a certain restraint in her society, and as a consequence, fail to please and amuse her, even if they would take pains to that effect, which they do not take. When one of my fellow-guests laid such stress upon the fact of the *Ministre des beaux-arts* having been so charming at her dinner-table, a more logical mind than mine might have concluded that the *ministre* was not amiable every day of the week or at every entertainment, notwithstanding the testimony of the second speaker, to which, like Falstaff's tailor, he might have required a more unimpeachable guarantee. I wish to point out

that I am not dealing just now with women who are on the fringe of Republican society, but with those who are, as it were, the ornamental pattern interwoven with its fabric. To all intents and purposes they are *grandes dames de par le monde—le monde républicain*, if you will; and whatsoever "Brantômesque" traits they may be possessed of, they never degenerate into "Zolaesque," as far as the outer world is enabled to judge. Their intellectual qualities are not of a very high order, but, as the Duchesse de Chevreuse said of her diamonds when Napoleon I. asked her if they were all real—"They are not, but they are good enough for here."

Well, with very few exceptions, the politicians of to-day—it would be idle to call them statesmen—prefer the "Zolaesque." At the age when the young man, however studious and hardworking, gives the greater part of his thoughts and heart to a woman or to women, the sprouting politician is compelled to reserve his soul, his thoughts, his ardour, for the all-absorbing career he pursues. He lives amidst a pushing, jostling, and unscrupulous crowd, which frequently works and vociferates itself into a semi-lunatic condition. Ever and anon there is an almost literal interpretation of the motto, "Each one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." At such times he is compelled to watch every movement while carefully directing his own steps, lest by slackening his

pace he should become the prey of the evil one, or by stumbling have the political life trampled out of him. He must be for ever on the alert; he must not be diverted for a single moment from the path along which he is tearing at a breakneck speed; least of all must he take his eyes off the goal—the winning-post from which is suspended a portfolio with the figures "60,000 francs" inscribed on it. Anybody or anything calculated to obstruct his view of, or his progress towards that post, must be ruthlessly swept out of the way, were it the handsomest and most seductive woman ever created. Nay, he knows at the very outset that whatever consideration he may or would display to any other obstacle, human or otherwise, he cannot or dare not display it to woman; for to be diverted from his pursuit by her means absolute perdition from his point of view. But as, notwithstanding the hard and fast lines of his carefully-drawn-up programme, he is not altogether without a spark of chivalry towards her, he warns her off the course to be traversed beforehand; she may stand at the ropes as a spectator if she likes—that is a matter of supreme indifference to him. "And if I love thee, what is that to thee?" says the King to Goethe's "Iphigenia." The politician boldly reverses the line. "And if thou lovest me, what is that to me?" he asks. He is not more chaste than his fellow men, perhaps less. He has got all the sexual appetite of the others, but he grudges

himself the time to sit down at the carefully appointed board and to enjoy an artistically prepared *menu*. When his hunger gets too much for him, he gorges, and in hot haste too. He reminds one of the traveller who at each stoppage of the express rushes to the refreshment bar and devours any and everything that he can lay hold of; flings down a gold piece at the very moment the guard's whistle sounds, without being able to wait for the change—for our politician pays heavily for those hurried crammings; risks a succession of fits of indigestion; and at the end of his journey is incapable of doing justice to the excellent fare prepared for him. The latter part of my poor metaphor is not so extravagant as it may seem, for there comes a time and tide in the affairs of the politician when he is accounted "a good match," and, as such, introduced to a well-to-do and important Republican family, *ayant une demoiselle à marier*, a sweet and practically innocent girl, *une bonne bouche*, fit for a king; to whom, before marriage, he is not unlike young Marlow to "women of reputation and virtue," while after marriage . . . well; we all know that Byron said—"What one man neglects, another picks up," and need not insist upon the consequences. If his health hold out, he may continue to be a *gros mangeur—au restaurant;* he'll never be a *fin gourmet*. Gambetta had a notion of the fate in store for such men, and persistently refused to marry. "Je ne

tiens pas à écailler les huîtres, pour les voir avalées par les autres," he said on one occasion when hardly pressed to become a Benedick. As for dwelling upon his own aspirations with the goddess *de rencontre*, the *passing caprice* of a more refined category, the *maîtresse en titre*, the sweet *fiancée*, or even the legitimate spouse, the politician has no time for it. In his love affairs (?) he has all the brutality of the First Napoleon without his genius.

CHAPTER VIII.

Round about the Palais-Bourbon—The Salle des Pas-Perdus—M. Adolphe Ranc—Actors and critics—The editor of *Le Matin*—M. Arthur Meyer of *Le Gaulois*—M. Edouard Hervé of *Le Soleil*—An anecdote of the Duc de Noailles—M. Ribot—M. Clemenceau—An anecdote of Gambetta in the heyday of his popularity—An anecdote of King Christian IX.—M. Henri Brisson—M. Goblet—Some late ambassadors—A hint to future historians—The President of the Chamber—The President's bell.

AND now, let us glance at some of these men enacting the play—the farce, if you will—of shaping the destinies of France, at the Palais-Bourbon, the erstwhile residence of the illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, of the Mademoiselle de Nantes of Saint-Simon's *Mémoires*, the widow of that mischievous dwarf, Louis, third Duc de Bourbon-Condé, the small-minded and small-bodied son of the great Condé.

The prologue to the play, which is enacted in the Salle des Pas-Perdus, officially, the Salle de la Paix, is often more amusing than the play itself, especially to those on whom the strutting and posing of some of the actors produces as much effect as would a Bramah latch-key on the

lock of a feudal castle; so let us linger for a little while in the Salle des Pas-Perdus.

Here is an actor who neither struts nor poses, but who, without being a great man, according to the gospel of greatness preached to-day, is profitable company, take him whatever way you will—an actor who has steadfastly refused to assume a principal part—an actor who has never claimed more than the daily hire of which the humblest labourer is said to be worthy—who has been much maligned when the mere "mummers" were applauded—who has never played for effect, though his real patrons were always the "gods" and the "groundlings"—an actor with whose part I have no sympathy, but whom I cannot help respecting for the unselfish manner in which he conceived and rendered it. He is not much to look at, this Adolphe Ranc, who said to Mr. (afterwards Sir) Richard Wallace when the latter handed him the first monthly instalment of 10,000 francs for the poor of Paris during the siege—"Monsieur, if there were many aristocrats like you, there would be need of fewer Republicans like myself." There is nothing very remarkable about him except his somewhat careless dress; the black beard, largely streaked with grey, is allowed to run more or less wild; there is a noteworthy absence of that white shirt-front, the presence of which always distinguishes the well-to-do Frenchman; and yet, in spite of all this,

in spite of his unbending radical opinions, of his share in the doings of the Commune, or just because of them—for I do not happen to get my opinions from the glib leader-writers on one side or the other—I would sooner trust my honour and my life in an emergency—property I have none; if I had, I would trust that too—to Adolphe Ranc, than to most of the men who profess to look upon him as a firebrand. All the others, or nearly all, are actuated by their wants and material appetites. I have known Adolphe Ranc for nearly thirty years; I caught my first glimpse of him at the Café de Madrid when I was twenty; and I feel confident that he has never committed a shabby or dishonourable act, politically or otherwise; and that he has never bartered his convictions for money or advancement, though he has been tempted, not once, but a dozen times.

In this green-room, for the Salle des Pas-Perdus is virtually that, the critics foregather in large numbers. Some are critics and actors in one, like MM. Paul de Cassagnac, Henri Maret, Georges Clemenceau, Joseph Reinach, Camille Pelletan, and three or four others. They are neither the worst critics nor the worst actors, and preferable by far to the critics "pure and simple," whether they are the editors of the papers they represent or not. Here is one of

the editor-critics, M. Edwards of *Le Matin*, a tall, stylish-looking man, whose semi-English origin is mainly shown in his appearance, for he rarely misses an opportunity of saying something disagreeable about his father's native land. He is conversing with M. Ranc, or rather he is talking to him, for M. Ranc listens more often than he speaks. The physical and sumptuary contrast between these two is somewhat startling—not so startling, though, as the mental and moral contrast if everything were known. M. Ranc is "*peuple*," as Labruyère has it; M. Edwards would be aristocratic; the one's heart is decidedly in the right place; the other's, after prompting him to be the henchman of M. Cornély, the most uncompromising champion of sovereign power by right divine, suddenly caused him to drift into political eclecticism, as represented by *Le Matin;* M. Ranc clings frantically to that supposed lightning-conductor "constitutional radicalism," in order to avert another crash of anarchy; M. Edwards is astride on that weather-cock "liberal journalism," and fancies himself in an observatory.

M. Edwards "patronises" the Republic as the natty little man a few yards away from him "patronises" the Constitutional Monarchy and the Comte de Paris, whose staunchest follower he proclaims himself to be. I never meet M. Arthur Meyer, *Directeur* of *Le Gaulois*, whether

it be at Sheen House, Bignon's—where M. Meyer lunches and dines nearly every day when his social engagements allow him, and where I dine only when I am taken, or in the Salle des Pas-Perdus, without being reminded of that scene at Wigan between a collier and a street preacher. The latter was holding forth, dealing out death, destruction, and perdition, after the manner of the clergy of old, to all those who refused to believe in his doctrines, when the former interrupted him—"Who art thou, my man, as talk'st in that way?" he asked. "I am an humble follower of Christ," was the reply. "Art thou? Well, if a'd been Christ, and thou'dst followed me, a'd ha' stoned thee." However, there is no knowing what may happen, in spite of the Duc de Broglie's exclamation when he heard of the death of the Prince Imperial—"The Republic has the luck of it; the Comte de Paris is alive, and the Prince Imperial is dead." And after all, it was an ass that carried Christ into Jerusalem.

That "Apollo all but the head" fights on the same side with M. Meyer; but how differently! It is M. Edouard Hervé, the editor of *Le Soleil*, the Conservative candidate for Paris, who in the general election of 1885 managed to secure 140,000 votes—not sufficient, however, to carry him to the Chamber. He is one of the two journalists on whom was conferred the honour of membership

by the Académie,[1] where he occupies the chair of the late Duc de Noailles, between whom and his successor there exists a curious trait of political resemblance. One evening in the early part of August 1830, the young and recently married nobleman was seated with his wife at the Chateau de Maintenon, which has become so solitary since. The young couple, notwithstanding their married happiness, were anxious indeed; they were waiting for tidings of that sudden and unforeseen revolution which was to shatter so many hopes to the ground. All at once the rumbling sound of several carriages was heard. They were evidently advancing slowly, those conveyances, more like those forming part of a funeral procession than those of ordinary travellers eager to reach their destination. It was, in fact, a funeral procession, the funeral of the "sovereign right divine," for in another moment Charles X., almost bent double with fatigue and grief, entered the great hall, and a little later the Duc and Duchesse de Noailles were listening reverently to the last instructions—as far as the Duke was concerned—of the last Bourbon King. Next morning the Duke was politically free, and he remained free up to the day of his death, which enabled

[1] The other was M. John Lemoinne, the editor of the *Journal des Débats*, who at the very hour I write has been succeeded by M. Ferdinand Brunetière, the editor of *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*. Prévost Paradol does not count from my point of view. He owed his election to the influence of Napoleon III.

him to render some service to his country during the monarchy of Louis-Philippe and under the Third Republic. During the Second Empire he retired from public life; but I am under the impression, in fact, have been as good as told by the informant to whom I owe the above story, that this retirement was due to his personal dislike of an exalted personage dangerously near to the throne, and not to a want of sympathy with the sovereign or his aspirations. As my portrait-gallery does not include a sketch of the Duc de Noailles, whom I saw only once in my life, I need not insist upon this, and may return to M. Hervé, who, as I have said, has for several years already acted somewhat like his predecessor in the Academic chair. He has, without relinquishing his well-known allegiance to the House of Orleans, endeavoured to serve his country within the measure of his abilities, which are very great indeed. His predecessor's sons are acting in the same manner, or at any rate were doing so a few years ago. But they served their country without forfeiting their liberty of conscience, awaiting better days perhaps. Here is an anecdote which will perhaps more fully illustrate my meaning. A brilliant general who is at the same time an accomplished gentleman, and the bearer of an historic name, was talking to a friend. The latter said, "You are remaining in the army in spite of everything; you whose

place is on the steps of the throne." "The steps of the throne?" was the answer. "Well, I am on the steps of the throne. I am waiting. The one who is not in his place is not I." That was what the Duc de Noailles thought, albeit that he did not give utterance to his thoughts. That is what his sons think; that is what M. Hervé, this truly *grand seigneur* of journalism, thinks. Chateaubriand said—"I have often driven with a golden bridle a pair of old crocks of reminiscences which I fondly imagined to be a pair of spirited three-year-old hopes." M. Edouard Hervé does not fall into that error. His cattle, whatever they be, are young; he has not thought fit to drape himself, because of his faithful adherence to the House of Orleans, either in a shroud or in motley.

M. Ribot, who is just passing by, has gone a step further, and frankly rallied to the Republic. One might easily mistake him for a grandson of Louis-Philippe, for there is a striking likeness between him and the Duc de Nemours when the latter was young, albeit that the late Premier himself is turning grey. I happened to be in the Salle des Pas-Perdus on the day of his *début* as President of the Council, and could not help thinking that no man had ever waited more patiently for his chance than he. He is one of the few men who are not afraid of M. Clemenceau. The struggle between these two is inevitable.

It will be terrible, though not long; for whatever may happen, the disciple of M. Dufaure will fight fair, and I should not like to pledge myself to the same extent with regard to the erstwhile Radical deputy's tactics. One thing is, however, certain—whenever M. Ribot fights a pitched battle, and not an outpost affair like that of the beginning of last year—and happens to be worsted, he will fall fighting, and probably like a thoroughbred—that is, never to rise again, while all the other ministers since the real advent of the Third Republic (by which I mean the election of M. Grévy to the Presidency) have simply fallen like so many cab-horses, to be on their legs again in so many minutes. From this wholesale statement I do not even exclude the late M. Jules Ferry; but I am not concerned with the dead at present, but with the living.

I said just now that M. Ribot has patiently awaited his chance, so patiently, in fact, as to make the Estancelins, the Bochers, the Haussonvilles, and even the royal tenants of Stowe themselves, wonder whether he might not be waiting for them. If at any period of his political career M. Ribot intended to throw in his lot with the Orleanists, such intentions must have received their death-blow long ago at the hands of the very head of the illustrious family, and M. Ribot said no doubt mentally, what Rivarol wrote to Louis XVI.—"Vous n'avez pas

voulu être mon roi, je ne veux plus être votre sujet." M. Ribot is made of very stern stuff, by which I do not mean that he is "starched" like the erstwhile Ambassador to England and actual President of the Senate, M. Challemel-Lacour, or the late Jules Ferry. On the contrary, M. Ribot is most courteous and agreeable, even to the merest casual acquaintance; but he towers mentally a head and shoulders above the majority of the men in power, and that is a decided disadvantage, especially if the mental superiority be allied to unbending honesty, under a *régime* which would fain make us believe that "*la carrière est ouverte aux talents*" ("the tools to those who can use them," as Carlyle translated it), but which (the *régime*) has until now proved by its every action that its borrowed motto is a lie, and that any man of great talent, let alone of genius, is sure to find the ground "spiked" by the mediocrities, apprehensive of losing their emoluments. Though not particularly apt at, or fond of, prophesying, I would not hesitate to predict the future of a good many of these mediocrities; I should not like to commit myself with regard to M. Ribot. In the country of the blind the one-eyed is king; but the two-eyed would most likely be regarded as a monster and suffer martyrdom.

Seeing that M. Clemenceau's name has cropped up incidentally under my pen, I may just as well

sketch him as he stands with his back against the reproduction of the *Laocoon*, which has given rise to so many bad jokes. Englishmen ought to be particularly interested in M. Clemenceau; but for him England's position in Egypt would not be what it is, for it was he who overthrew the Freycinet Ministry on the question of joint action. M. Clemenceau warned France not to be made England's cat's-paw the second time; the Crimean War having furnished the first occasion, &c., &c. M. Clemenceau is, moreover, the idol of the English Radicals, who never fail to pay him a visit during their trips to Paris, visits the honour of which is not, perhaps, so greatly appreciated as they imagine. I have quoted elsewhere the remark of M. Edouard Hervé, to the effect that beneath every French aristocrat there lurks a democrat. M. Clemenceau, though belonging to a very honourable Vendean family, is decidedly not an aristocrat by birth, and it is probably on account of this that I and a good many *qui ne se paient pas de mots* fail to find the real democrat behind the professed one. He is overbearing to his inferiors, and superciliously polite to his superiors —for M. Clemenceau has superiors, mentally, morally, and socially, in and out of the Chambers, and the very fact of his not adopting the same tone with every one proves that he himself has an uncomfortable suspicion of that superiority.

But he has not his equal in or out of the Chamber—I am almost tempted to say in any European Assembly, as a debater; albeit that for the last thirteen years I have never heard him address the House for longer than ten minutes at a time. His style is to that of Gambetta as a flash of forked lightning to a prolonged thunder-clap. I no more believe in the sincerity of M. Clemenceau than Madame de Staël believed in that of Mirabeau; I have, moreover, no sympathy with the legislation M. Clemenceau affects, apart from the question of the sincerity or the reverse of its advocate; and the value of M. Clemenceau's legislation I doubt as profoundly as I doubt the political regeneration of France since 1871. And yet I feel inclined every now and then to applaud him as frantically as Necker's daughter applauded the great tribune more than a hundred years ago. Each sentence is like a sword thrust, when it is not a hot iron applied to quivering flesh. If I wished to continue the metaphor, I might add that it produces a hissing sound from those at whom it is aimed. I have never met with a man calculated to impress one more at the first glance than M. Clemenceau; but I am not quite certain—I am speaking for myself alone—whether the impression would last or be intensified if I were to be very long in his company. I lived for a long while within a quarter of a mile of M. Clemen-

ceau's place at Montmartre; that is, I lived in the Avenue Trudaine and adjacent streets, which are within the *boulevards excentriques*, while his residence was beyond; and I used to meet the ex-deputy frequently. I gradually got used to the extraordinary skull and features, which to describe scientifically would require a Gall and a Lavater combined. The skull especially would puzzle any one but a thoroughly capable phrenologist and osteologist; it is, though apparently round like a bullet, full of knobs and ridges, while the features, but for the nose, are Mongolian, or Mongoloid-American would perhaps be a more correct term. But for that nose, the like of which I have only seen once before on a white man's face (on that of Frédéric Lemaître), one might mistake M. Clemenceau for a cannibal, a very intelligent cannibal, but a cannibal for all that. Odd to relate, this powerful, almost phenomenal debater winces at an epigram levelled at himself.

In republicanism it is not the first but the last step which becomes most difficult. A man who has been for several years the idol of the most mischievous and turbulent section of the Paris population, finds it hard to realise that there can be people audacious enough to withstand his will on the plea that all men are equal. Rightly or wrongly, M. Clemenceau was for a considerable while the idol of the proletariat; but

the worship brought its penalties to the idol. When Gambetta was at the height of his popularity, he went one day to one of the agricultural districts in the south of France to support a Republican candidate. As was his wont, he inquired after the farmers' wants, and was told that the country wanted rain. "Rain," he said, in his jaunty, jovial manner; "well, I'll see about it when I get back to Paris; I'll have a talk with the Minister of Agriculture and the Director of the Observatory." And these shrewd, but withal simple-minded folk trusted in his implied promise to procure for them the much-needed downpour. This beats the story told by Dean Ramsay in his *Reminiscences*, of the Scotch minister who not only prayed for rain from the pulpit, but proceeded to give the Almighty directions as to the exact manner in which it should descend; but I can vouch for the truth of what I state. About that same period I was walking down one of the side streets in the Chaussée de Clignancourt, when I heard a violent altercation between an old dame and a *sergent de ville* on account of the dust before her door. The former let the latter have it all his own way; she gave her name and so forth; then she lifted her shrivelled arms to heaven. "Grand Dieu, grand Dieu!" she exclaimed; "si Gambetta savait seulement ce qui se passe à Paris!" The Princess of Wales could probably cap the last anecdote by relating a dozen similar ones

about the times when she was a young girl, and when her father used to perambulate the poorer quarters of Copenhagen, accompanied by his two great Danes. "Wait till King Christian comes by, and we'll ask him about it," was the usual exclamation when a conflict arose between the police and the humbler inhabitants. What was better still, His Majesty was never appealed to in vain, and, best of all, his decision was never questioned, however much it might go against the appellant. Well, in the heyday of his success, M. Clemenceau's name was as frequently invoked as that of Gambetta, and that of King Christian, and mostly by the Paris cabmen. Not once, but a score of times, have I had M. Clemenceau's name thrown in my teeth when inscribing a complaint against an insolent Jehu in the register provided at every rank by the police; for that is a thing they decidedly manage better in Paris than in London. One need not put up with bullying there unless one likes. One is not bound to waste one's time by taking out a summons and losing a valuable day in court. An official appointed for the purpose settles such matters for the complainant, who is invited to attend only when the charge is denied. Under no circumstances is the complainant called upon to provide cabby with a day's leisure and give him six shillings for doing nothing. Neither Gambetta nor Christian IX. was ever besieged by his idolaters as was M.

Clemenceau, who found them at last too numerous to be pleasant, for they came on the slightest pretext, in spite of the far from polite reception accorded to them. They did not mind it. It is wonderful what an amount of downright insolence the Republican artisan will bear from his favourite deputy, while he will scarcely allow his employer to remonstrate with him. The following may serve as an instance in point. M. Clemenceau was originally a doctor, and used to give gratuitous advice at certain hours of the day. In one respect, at any rate, M. Clemenceau was like Abernethy—he was rough and abrupt with his patients. One morning one of these entered his consulting-room. "Take off your coat, waistcoat, and shirt," said the physician as he went on writing, "I'll attend to you directly." Three minutes later, on looking up, he found the man stripped to the waist. "There is nothing the matter with you," said M. Clemenceau when he had examined him. "I know there isn't." "Then what did you come for?" "To consult you on a political question." "Then what did you strip for?" "I thought you wanted an illustration of the emaciated body of the man who lives by the sweat of his brow."

This must have been too much even for M. Clemenceau, for shortly afterwards he removed from Montmartre. M. Clemenceau, if I am not mistaken, went to the Quartier Marbœuf—or

Marbeuf—but seven times out of ten your Radical deputy, after a little while, takes up his quarters in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Of course the pretext is the short distance from the Palais-Bourbon; the real reason the considerable distance that divides the aristocratic quarter from the Faubourgs Saint-Antoine, Belleville, and Ménilmontant, the hot-beds of turbulent, restless demagogy.

If we are to believe the late, though still living, Madame Clemenceau, her erstwhile husband is the *galantin* of the Third Republic, as Barère was the *galantin* of the "Terror." Barère said soft nothings to the fair petitioners that crowded his ante-chamber. He smiled on them; promised to look after their welfare; pretended to be moved by their looks and tears; and toyed with them as a kitten plays with a ball of knitting-wool. When on the evening of the 3rd September 1793, thirty-one actors and actresses of the Comédie-Française were taken to prison *en masse* for having performed on the previous night an adaptation of Richardson's "Pamela" by François de Neufchâteau, which displeased the Jacobins on account of the praise lavished on the English Government, and the moral maxims placed on the lips of lords while the Duke of York was overrunning the territories of the Republic: when that wholesale incarceration took place, only three of the "enemies of the Republic" were released after

three weeks; the rest remained under lock and key for eleven months, in fact until after the death of Robespierre. One of the three fortunate comedians was our old acquaintance, Mlle. Lange, of "Madame Angot" notoriety. It was Barère's influence which opened the doors to her. M. Clemenceau has never had an opportunity of interceding for one of the fascinating actresses of the Comédie-Française of to-day; first of all, because recalcitrant actresses, whatever their offence, are no longer consigned to the Four-L'Evêque, which house of detention itself has disappeared, or to other prisons; secondly, because his favourite *protégée* (who only died within the last month [1]), though she managed to get her feet within the Comédie-Française, never got those feet before the footlights. The engagement was duly signed and sealed, the salary was as duly paid, but the "lady" was never cast for a part. A similar thing had happened during the administration of M. Emile Perrin, for the men of the Third Republic, who never ceased to inveigh against the favouritism and nepotism of the men of the Second Empire and its preceding *régimes*, nevertheless do avail themselves of their positions to practise what they condemned and condemn. When the first *pensionnaire* thus introduced, attempted, after months of weary waiting, to obtain her *début*, M. Perrin simply stared

[1] Written in February '94.

her in the face with that stony stare peculiarly his own. "Mademoiselle," he said at last, "vous êtes entrée ici par force; débutez par force." M. Jules Claretie, more suave than his predecessor, refrained from giving an *ultimatum:* he merely tired the "lady" out; but the final result was the same, the "lady" resigned her engagement. From all this it will be seen that the "Spartans" of the Third Republic, though they keep her carefully out of politics, have an eye for a pretty actress, as well as the "Spartans" of the "Terror" and the Sybarites of the Directory. M. Clemenceau therefore need not deny his connection with the Comédie-Française. "Whatever happens has happened before," even in the best regulated of republics. Gambetta, whose career bore more than an accidental likeness to Mirabeau's, disappeared from the scene, like Mirabeau, when the respective *régimes* were virtually very young, for, I repeat, the Third Republic is not unlike a girl in her teens, who, by means of a long dress, would pretend to be older than she really is. Mirabeau's death was accelerated, if not caused, by an imprudent supper-party at Mlle. Coulon's, the *danseuse;* Gambetta's death was attributed to a wound received accidentally in his attempt to wring from a lady the pistol with which she intended to kill herself. Mme. Leona Lévy may be, for all I know, dead, but I am not

speaking without foundation. But neither Mirabeau nor Gambetta was ever influenced by a woman in the way I would suggest. Mlle. de Nehra, if we judge by her diary only, was to the full as intelligent and accomplished as Mme. Edmond Adam; yet neither succeeded in making the men whom they would have fain inspired, swerve a hair's-breadth from their intended course. We can hear both men say mentally with Goethe —"Sie ist volkommen, und sie fehlet Darin allein, das sie mich liebt."

I said just now that the "Spartans" of the Third Republic had an eye for a pretty actress. There are several to whom I would give the benefit of the doubt with regard to that accusation—if it be one—but M. Henri Brisson I would unhesitatingly acquit. M. Brisson is as chaste "by temperament" as was Robespierre, without being "a libertine in imagination," like the latter. Such chastity on the part of such a magnificent specimen of physical manhood—who is not bound by a vow to that effect—would be difficult to realise anywhere; in France it may be regarded as absolutely phenomenal. For as M. Brisson stands there talking to one of his former ministerial colleagues, one is bound to admit that it would be difficult to find a handsomer man in any country than the late President of the Panama Commission. The face is a pure oval, the nose and mouth are almost faultless, and the eyes

expressive to a degree. M. Brisson is somewhat above the middle height, with a capitally proportioned frame; he dresses very carefully; somewhat sombrely, but probably in thorough keeping with his temperament. Allowing for the difference of attire, some of the Hebrew prophets must have looked like M. Brisson; I feel certain that they acted and spoke as he does; and it will easily be admitted that these Hebrew gentlemen could not have been cheerful companions in everyday life. M. Brisson, like Mrs. Gummidge, is a "lone, lorn creature," and delights in his loneliness. He was, before Gambetta took him up, a barrister, neither briefless nor prosperous. They still tell in and around the Palais de Justice an anecdote about Maître Henri Brisson, for the whole truth of which I will not vouch; it has no doubt been embellished; but the main fact actually occurred. In those days there was a President of one of the Courts who suffered terribly from insomnia, and the physicians prescribed their soporifics in vain. It so happened that Maître Henri Brisson was counsel for the plaintiff in a case which, on the face of it, was a forlorn hope. His opponent was either Maître Georges Lachaud senior, or Maître Barboux, the same who was engaged lately in the Lesseps trial. I will not be certain which of these two it was, but he enjoyed the reputation of being a past master of oratorical skill and

profound legal knowledge; he was, in fact, a shining light of the French bar. He might have been the merest *stagiaire* for all the chance he had, for the President fell into a sound slumber while Maître Brisson droned his drone, and never heard a word of the arguments for the defence. He only awoke when one of the assessors (puisne judge) nudged him in the side. In spite of the palpable injustice, there was a judgment for the plaintiff. Henri Brisson, the gossips add, was offered an engagement as private reader to the judge, but the offer was declined. The judge was disappointed but not angry, and in the few cases in which the young barrister was subsequently engaged before him, never gave judgment against his clients.

The latter part of the story, including the judge's offer of an engagement, I beg leave to doubt; the former part I am inclined to believe implicitly. During the five years it was my duty to attend the sittings of the Chamber on important occasions, and afterwards, during my periodical visits to Paris, I have heard M. Brisson speak at length, not once, but a couple of scores of times, and the result was invariably the same. I did not fall asleep like the judge; I listened with the greatest attention, wondering all the while why sleep refused to come, seeing that three-fourths of my colleagues in "the Foreign Press Gallery" were indulging in fre-

quently recurring "forty winks." Those who kept bravely awake beside myself were mostly Germans and Austrians, with two or three Americans. The Germans and Austrians assured me that, compared to the bores to whom they had to listen in their Reichsraths at home, M. Brisson was amusing. The Americans averred that they had had two or three years' training at St. Stephen's, where they had to put up with seats in the Strangers' Gallery, the British Parliament not providing accommodation for the representatives of foreign papers. At the outset of their apprenticeship they had endeavoured to beguile their weariness by taking a newspaper or book from their pockets. The attendant had told them that reading was against the rules. Their only defence against drowsiness having been prohibited, they naturally yielded to it, but in that instance also were warned that sleeping was not allowed, and that repeated indulgence would entail expulsion. Seeing that part of their livelihood was at stake, they had become hardened: hardened enough, in fact, to be able to face Solomon Eagle himself were he to revisit the glimpses of the moon.

On looking over what I have written, I feel inclined to scratch the whole of it out, for I candidly confess that were I to light upon a similar passage in any publication short of a *soi-disant* comic one, I would be disposed to vote it trash,

if not worse. And yet I can assure the reader that I have exaggerated nothing. There is not a single man in the Chamber of Deputies who does not view with dismay the attempt of M. Brisson to get into the rostrum, for I may be permitted to point out that the moment a deputy looks like contemplating a set speech, he is cheered, hooted, or sometimes hounded to the tribune. A member rarely speaks from his seat, except to make a passing remark, and then only by the tacit goodwill of the House. As an instance of the dread M. Brisson's oratory inspires, I may recount a personal anecdote. On the day of Victor Hugo's funeral I was among a serried group of deputies while MM. Auguste Vacquerie and Floquet delivered their funeral orations. M. Brisson was standing a few paces off, and I asked a neighbour if M. Brisson was not going to speak. "Assuredly not," was the answer. "If he did, Saussier and all the officers of his staff would tumble off their horses, and the horses themselves would want waking afterwards. I believe Brisson intended to speak, but Floquet, to whom he read and rehearsed his speech, dissuaded him." "In what way?" I asked. "After he had done, Floquet said—'It is very fine; still, I am very sorry.' 'What for?' asked Brisson, in a sepulchral voice. 'I could have wished that you had died, and that Victor Hugo had been deputed to eulogise your virtues.'"

Frenchmen are apt to give the respectable bore in the tribune, however well intentioned that bore may be, a shorter shrift than our members at St. Stephen's; they, the Frenchmen, will mercilessly shout him down, regardless of the amenities of debate, and demand *la clôture*, irrespective of the number of speakers who have asked to be heard; and the President is bound to take the sense of the House on the demand. After that there is no possibility of opening the original question again; the only resource of the minority is to speak against the motion by sending *one* member to the tribune, for a second speech is not allowed. Well, notwithstanding the dismay his appearance in the tribune generally provokes, M. Brisson is almost invariably listened to with respectful silence, and only interrupted on questions of policy, or because he rubs an adversary the wrong way, and not on account of his ponderous style. Whence this exceptional tolerance of the Chamber with regard to him?

Because even his most determined adversaries admit the integrity of the man, his sterling character, his superiority to most of the Republicans around him. That alone is sufficient to single him out from the rest, and his opponents' abstention from all gratuitous interruption is, as it were, a tribute to his sullen but distinctly genuine honesty, which seems to be wholly out of keeping with the political tactics practised in

the latter end of the nineteenth century. M. Brisson is regarded as a Republican modelled after the antique pattern, inflexible with regard to principles, self-inoculated against the prevail ing contagion, proof against corruption, in short, a modern Cato and Brutus rolled into one, "probably," as some one said, "because there was not sufficient material among the latter-day would-be saviours of France to make two men of that stamp."

Unfortunately, the moral has its reverse. All these sterling qualities are rendered useless as far as the welfare of France is concerned, for the want of a little amiability and tolerance, by the absolute dislike to cakes and ale which in M. Brisson's opinion should mark the sincere Republican. M. de Montespan thought fit to wear perpetual mourning for that wife of his, though she was "very much alive," as Louis XIV. could have testified. I cannot understand why M. Brisson should be wearing perpetual mourning in his looks, gait, and demeanour for the Third Republic, which, after all, has done him no injury, and is not likely to fling itself into the arms of either Prince Victor or the Comte de Paris. From being an obscure though respected barrister, he became, thanks to that Third Republic, a President of the Chamber, a Prime Minister, and, but for his own fault, would have become the Chief Magis-

trate of France. I repeat, but for his own fault, for odd, or perhaps most natural to relate, in that apparently frivolous Paris, which in overwhelming numbers made M. Edouard Lockroy her "first deputy," there was a large substratum of serious-minded men—by no means all Jacobins—who elected to pin their faith on the less attractive but more sterling qualities of M. Brisson when in 1887 the revelations inculpating his son-in-law in the "Caffarel scandal" compelled M. Jules Grévy to resign his functions. M. Brisson stood practically and theoretically a fairer chance of being elected to the Presidential chair than M. Sadi Carnot. But those senators and deputies who "know their Paris," and there are a goodly number, were virtually afraid to carry so austere a Republican to the Elysée-Bourbon, and they communicated their fears to those who did *not* "know their Paris." Republican austerity is very well in theory; the man who would carry it out at the Elysée-Bourbon by *utterly* abstaining from giving *fêtes* and entertainments would not only arouse the laughter—and the contemptuous laughter—of the whole of Paris, but, what is worse, her ire. "The Parisian must show his teeth; he must either growl or laugh," said Victor Hugo, and if M. Brisson had been "enthroned" in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the Parisians would not have left off growling until M. Brisson had resigned, for M. Brisson,

they knew, would have assuredly resigned sooner than tolerate the sound of minstrelsy and watch the twinkling of merry feet under the same roof that sheltered his Republican head.

The little man to whom M. Brisson has been talking all the while would have cut a better figure at the former town residence of Madame de Pompadour; for M. René Goblet's Republicanism is also above suspicion, and, though like most small men, he is somewhat cantankerous —which M. Brisson is not—and more or less provincial, he is at the same time bright and witty. It is a well-known fact that when he was at the Ministry of the Interior, he was much more master of the situation than any of his predecessors had been, and than any of his successors, save M. Constans, have been since. The officials at the Place Beauveau are no respecters of ministers. There are generally three Ministers of the Interior to every Administration, and though the officials have no time to become familiar with their fast-succeeding chiefs' characters, the contempt is there all the same. M. Goblet had no objection to their becoming familiar, but was determined to put a stop to their contempt. There was in those days, and there may be still, a "Director of the Press"—read, "head of the newspaper department"—named Carle. His principal duty consisted in looking to the cuttings and extracts

from the French and foreign sheets to be laid before his superior. M. Carle, in spite of his benevolent countenance and patriarchal white locks, used to delight in annoying the fast-succeeding chiefs. His method was invariably the same. During the honeymoon of his term of office, the minister was allowed to see none but flattering and complimentary paragraphs; then their number gradually diminished, and less satisfactory expressions of quasi-public opinion were substituted. At the same time M. Carle's attitude to the minister whose popularity was on the wane, underwent a change. It grew more sympathetic in direct proportion to the vituperations of the press. On the very first day of his assumption of the portfolio of the Interior, M. Goblet took the bull by the horns. "I have heard, M. Carle," he said, "that you are very much affected by having to show adverse criticisms to your chiefs. If there should be any, please to keep them back, and if you will take my advice, don't read them yourself. You'll be spared a great deal of pain, and I shall not have the sad spectacle of seeing you suffer." M. Goblet is the only Minister of the Interior of whom M. Carle had subsequently a good word to say. Carle was probably his only admirer, for M. Goblet is not liked. He is overbearing, and still fancies himself a god of some kind. Perhaps it is not his fault, but that of the provincial town

in the north where he began his career. M. Goblet poses as the apostle of "decentralisation." He would fain do away with prefects and sub-prefects, and limit the authority of the Minister of the Interior over the mayors of towns, large and small, as well as communes. The idea in itself may be good or the reverse for France. Unfortunately, M. Goblet is not an agreeable example of a local celebrity, "promoted to higher destinies;" the most "buckram" prefect, the most conceited sub-prefect, is a Chesterfield, and modest creature, compared to him. But he is not devoid of brains, and but for the lack of vocal power, his speeches would afford an agreeable and refreshing change from the "dull fluency" around. As it is, he has great difficulty in making himself heard. M. Goblet's biography, like that of the late M. Tirard, and a dozen others, reads, at the first blush, like a fragment from the libretto of an opera-bouffe or extravaganza, rather than a piece of sober fact; but even with the comparatively large space at my command, I cannot fill in all the particulars, nor afford more than a passing glimpse of all the figures whose names are household words — if they are not by-words — with newspaper readers throughout the world. As the hour for the sitting draws nigh, they come trooping into the Salle des Pas-Perdus, singly, in pairs, in groups. Here comes M. de Douville-Maillefeu,

the would-be Mirabeau of the Third Republic, who, up to the present, has only succeeded in being its Triboulet. At his heels almost, walks Mgr. d'Hulst, the successor to Mgr. Freppel, and the man upon whom religious and Conservative France is inclined to look as the counterpart of the Abbé (afterwards Cardinal) Maury. The little fellow who nimbly gets out of the ecclesiastic's way—whether out of respect or dislike, I am unable to say—and who looks like Fancelli, the well-known Italian tenore robusto, is M. Graignon, the erstwhile Prefect of Police, who, during the "Caffarel scandal," so unfortunately lost the documents and letters which would have proved the innocence of M. Daniel Wilson. It is on the stroke of three, and the lobby is very full, for it is a field day. Here is M. de Freycinet, looking not unlike Mr. George Bentley, the eminent publisher, though somewhat shorter; the silk purse of which the Third Republic, in spite of everything that has been said lately, has been unable to make socially and financially a sow's ear. Immediately behind him come three former ambassadors to the Court of St. James's—the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia, M. Challemel-Lacour, and M. Léon Say. They are not together, though their elbows almost touch, and they are as far apart, mentally, socially, and morally, as the poles are asunder. The "History of the French Embassy in London," and the

"History of the English Embassy in Paris," have yet to be written, but whosoever writes them, whether he intend to publish them in the form of bulky quartos or modest octavos, must divest his mind of all idea of accomplishing a work of conciliation, and before engaging upon the task, must faithfully promise himself to eschew throughout the stock phrases of "friendly nations," "the sympathy existing between two great peoples," and so forth. I can give him an epigram which, if worked out in the proper spirit, will produce a more truthful version of the real state of feeling between the French and the English than all the complimentary after-dinner speeches of Lord Mayors and their "guests of the evening." It is not my own, but Lesage's: "We embraced one another most effusively, and have been the bitterest enemies since." M. Decrais is the thirty-ninth French Ambassador to the Court of St. James's since the First Revolution; Lord Dufferin is the eleventh English Ambassador to France during that same period. The historian, if he be so minded, will have no difficulty in pointing out the causes of this numerical difference, and showing its effect on the "friendly relations between two great peoples."

I am, however, not concerned with ambassadors at this present moment, consequently I let the duke and the erstwhile professor of philosophy pass, to contemplate for an instant the grandson

of the celebrated Jean Baptiste Say, who (the grandson) is the virtual and permanent, though unseen Finance Minister of the Third Republic, no matter whether the post be occupied nominally by M. Rouvier, M. Burdeau, or any one else. When the former is in office, M. Say's hand is least apparent; when the late M. Tirard held the portfolio, M. Say's hand was most apparent. As M. Haentjens, the Imperialist deputy, said once—"Tirard proposes, and Say disposes." Unlike the erstwhile manufacturer of mock jewellery, M. Say does not sacrifice to the graces: his trousers seem to be at perpetual loggerheads with his shoe-leather; the skirts of his coat are almost symbolical of his budgets—they meet in front, but there is an ugly gap behind. His moustache is the most wonderful part of him—it is a refractory, angry moustache, evidently ill at ease beneath the ever-quivering nostrils; the rest of the face is almost motionless, and the epithet of Thiers, "*gros egoïste*"—in a quarrel between two niggers, the one is sure to call the other "nigger"—that epithet which was altered by Gambetta into "*gras économe*," suggests itself at once to the observer.

All of a sudden there is a rolling of drums; M. Paul de Cassagnac, who has been talking to M. Edouard Hervé—"Apollo all but the legs in conversation with Apollo all but the head," as some one has it—M. Paul de Cassagnac vanishes

as if by magic, lest he should be compelled to take off his hat; but we all "uncover;" the troops present arms; and the President of the Chamber, preceded by two ushers, and flanked by two officers, passes between the lines of soldiers. I have not been in the Chamber for over fifteen months; the last President I saw was M. Floquet, and on that day his face curiously reminded me of Marie Antoinette's as the old prints represent her. It may have been a fancy of mine. When the President has disappeared, the Salle des Pas-Perdus becomes almost empty in a few minutes, and as I ascend to my perch on the second floor, by courtesy called "*la Tribune de la Presse Etrangère*," I can hear the sound of the President's bell. It is the signal that the business of the day has begun, for—

"C'est au bruit de la sonnette
Que l'on parle et qu'on se tait;
C'est au bruit de la sonnette
Qu'on se lève et qu'on s'assied;
Sans le bruit de la sonnette
Jamais rien ne se ferait."

CHAPTER IX.

Round about the Palais-Bourbon—More about the President's bell—Past Presidents and their performances on the instrument—Dupin *aîné*—A *mot* of M. Floquet—Unruly deputies—M. de Cassagnac—M. Baudry d'Asson—The President's task more difficult now than it was formerly—The President's hat—The President's chair and table—The eight secretaries—The rostrum—Orators of former days, and speakers of to-day—Interrupters—The official shorthand reporters and summary writers—Their honesty—French journalists and their duties—M. Emile Ollivier, the ex-Empress Eugenie, and Sir John Lintorn Simmons—The Quæstors—The members' stipend, and what it led to in one instance—First appearance of Gambetta on the political scene—A word about "An Englishman in Paris"—Refreshments for deputies—Quæstor Baze's reform—Distribution of the members' seats—The ministerial bench—The manner of voting—Ladies in the Chamber—Parliamentary oratory.

THAT metrical allusion to the importance of the President's bell in the Chamber with which I wound up just now is even more true at present than when it was written about a hundred years ago. It would be difficult perhaps to convey a just estimate of that importance, not only as it affects the deputies themselves, but as showing the temper and disposition of the chairman. I have not been at the Palais-Bourbon since MM. Casimir-Perier and Dupuy have occupied the position; but I remember the performances

on the bell of MM. de Morny, Walewski, and Schneider (during the Empire), and those of their successors, MM. Grévy, Buffet, d'Audiffret-Pasquier, Gambetta, Brisson, and Floquet, under the Third Republic. That of the late President of the Republic was a kind of sober, mild protest, eminently suggestive of a desire not to damage the metal, and, as if to lend colour to the suggestion, M. Grévy used to bend forward now and again to ascertain whether any such damage had been done. This method tallied with the character of the man who, whenever a heated discussion arose in the Ministerial Council, endeavoured to still the troubled waters with a "Do what you like, but don't let's have any fuss;" it tallied, above all, with his economical spirit, which saw no good in the smashing of furniture which had to be replaced. The subject of M. Grévy's "carefulness" is, however, too interesting, especially when viewed in connection with the exalted position he occupied, to be dismissed in a few lines; I will refer to it again in my notes about the Elysée-Bourbon.

M. Buffet's performance was equally characteristic of himself. It was sustained and prolonged even after the necessity for it had ceased—out of time and out of tune, defiant and harsh like his speeches, which were always sprinkled with things disagreeable to political friends and foes

alike, and emphasised by a scowling challenge to his listeners. M. Brisson's ring depressed you like the tolling at a funeral; Gambetta's sounded like a tocsin; and M. Floquet's two sharp jerks gave one the impression of the fall of the *lunette* on the condemned man's neck, and the whirr of the descending guillotine immediately afterwards. For M. Charles Floquet, though he is probably not the Jacobin of former days, "now that he's got a coo," would not like the knowledge of that change to go forth to the world at large. He lashed himself in a rage by shaking his bell, as Edmund Kean lashed himself in a rage by shaking a ladder before "going on" in the third act of "The Merchant of Venice." In my notes on the Comédie-Française there will be found an anecdote of Got's telling that story to M. Mounet-Sully. M. Floquet, who is a frequent visitor to the green-room, must have heard and applied it in his own way.

The greatest "virtuoso on the Presidential bell," however, was undoubtedly Dupin *aîné*, who occupied the chair from 1832 till 1839, and from May 24, 1849, till the day of the *Coup d'État*. Though I remember seeing him once or twice in the early sixties, I never heard him perform, his Presidential career having come to an end long before my time. His manipulation of the instrument was, by all accounts, something wonderful—in fact, if we are to believe his contemporaries,

many of whom are still alive, he was the most wonderful President the Chamber ever had or is likely to have. His remarks and answers to refractory or merely turbulent deputies remind one of Rivarol and Rochefoucauld. Here is one which the next time Dr. Farquharson attempts to suppress the titles of courtesy the members of the British House of Commons give to one another, may be pointed out to him with advantage. Among the most unruly members during the Second Republic was the so-called working-man Miot. One day he was addressing the Chamber, when, pretending to make a distinction between the two sides of the House, he turned to the left, saying—"*Citoyens démocrates;*" then turning to the right, he exclaimed—"*Messieurs les royalistes. . . .*" Having been called to order, he wilfully aggravated by correcting his address. "*Citoyens,*" he began; but Dupin interrupted him at once. "*Soyons citoyens, mais restons Messieurs,*" he suggested in a bantering voice. On another occasion, Jules Favre, in a debate on public education, was quoting Fouché and Talleyrand, and trying to fortify his position by saying that they belonged to the Church. "One moment," protested Dupin; "they had left the Church." "There may be a difference between Faith and Hope," quoth another member. "Between Faith and Hope, Monsieur, there is Charity," was the answer. My uncles, who admired Dupin greatly,

and who never missed an opportunity of attending the sittings of the Chamber while he was in the chair, left me a collection of his sayings, from which I might quote for hours, and justify my contention that there never was a President like him, and that there probably never will be one. They called Dupin's *mots* the libretto to his music, alluding to his marvellous performance on the bell. But they admitted that Royer-Collard (1828–1829–1830) ran him very hard, and was better tempered. One thing is certain; during my many years' experience of the Chamber of Deputies, a few witticisms *à la Dupin* would have been very welcome, but I do not recollect many that have emanated from the chair. Stay, I recollect one, but no more, and my memory is not a bad one for that kind of thing. I will endeavour to make it clear to the reader, but it is not very easy. M. Floquet was in the chair, and the thing came pat in reply to a spiteful remark from M. Paul de Cassagnac, who is one of the *enfants terribles* of the Chamber. It was in connection with a statement of the late M. Tirard, who before embarking in politics was a manufacturer of imitation jewellery in a small way. M. Tirard was still in the tribune when the editor of *L'Autorité*—it was *Le Pays* then, if I am not mistaken —exclaimed—"C'est faux." As a matter of course, he was promptly called to order, and as promptly corrected himself. "Vous avez raison,

M. le Président, j'aurais du dire, c'est du doublé." "Très bien, M. de Cassagnac, ce n'est pas mal pour une doublure." [1]

It was virtually telling M. de Cassagnac, who prides himself on having successfully bearded every President during the Third Republic, that he, the chairman, only considered him an "understudy"—in this instance to M. Baudry d'Asson, who during the whole of M. Tirard's speech had been interrupting, and rather cleverly. It was unjust to M. de Cassagnac, who as a "man of wit" is vastly superior to the "owner of one of the handsomest beards and packs of hounds in France." I am quoting the usual compliment paid to M. Baudry d'Asson. M. de Cassagnac is an *improvisateur*, while M. Baudry d'Asson carefully rehearses his effects. M. de Cassagnac's outbursts are to a certain extent excusable, for he is known to be hasty and excitable, though an excellent fellow at heart. M. Baudry d'Asson is equally kind-hearted, frank, and cordial to a degree, eminently serviceable, and has no temper to speak of, and yet, now that M. Pradié is gone, or has abandoned his tactics—for I am not certain whether he still belongs to the Chamber—M. Baudry d'Asson is the most turbulent creature there. Constitutionally, the French deputy is a more orderly being than his

[1] *Doublé* is the euphemism used by the French trade for mock jewellery; *doublure* means "understudy" as well as lining.

English counterpart; unfortunately, he is more impulsive, and when thus impelled, more demonstrative. I doubt whether he ever makes up his mind deliberately to provoke a "row" like the Irish member at St. Stephen's. When his excitement gets the better of him, he bangs his desk, and even "thumps" his neighbour, flourishes his paper-knife, shakes his fist at all and sundry; but he is sorry for all this afterwards, and faithfully promises himself not to do it again. Of course he breaks his promise, and perhaps on that same afternoon, but, as in Rip van Winkle's case, "that once doesn't count." M. Baudry d'Asson is the exception; his "hell" is not paved with good intentions. As I have said, he prepares his "incidents" as Scribe prepared the sensational situations in his comedies, as Victor Ducange prepared the *clous* of his melodramas. Proof whereof is the following. While the National Assembly was still at Versailles, a small party of deputies passing along one of the passages heard a terrible noise in one of the smaller committee rooms. There were evidently three individuals in there, two of whom had come to high words, and might come to blows if not interrupted, albeit that one of the three was apparently more calm than the others, and proffered words of paternal advice. "Do you maintain what you have said?" asked one of the violent disputants. "Not only do I maintain it, but I will repeat

it whenever and wherever you like," was the furious reply. Thereupon there was a shuffling of feet, and at last those outside opened the door. To their great surprise there was no one in the room but M. Baudry d'Asson, who had been rehearsing, with two imaginary interlocutors, a scene he intended to enact that afternoon in the Chamber. The first of those personages was an orator M. Baudry d'Asson meant to interrupt; the second was M. Jules Grévy, the then President of the Chamber, who was supposed to pour oil upon the troubled waters, though at the same time addressing, as in duty bound, some severe reprimands to the interrupting member; to which reprimands the latter responded victoriously. M. Pradié, of whom I spoke just now, proceeded differently. While M. Baudry d'Asson never professes to execute anything but solos, the other organised choruses of interruptions. In reality, it was never more than a quartet, for his followers did not exceed the number of the Tooley Street conspirators. Every now and then, but especially at the beginning of his attempt to found a "cave of Adullam," at which time he was positively alone, M. Pradié spread the rumour that he would hold a meeting in one of the committee rooms. M. Pradié locked himself into the said room, and the passers-by heard a most infernal noise, but no one was his dupe; only, in order to flatter his vanity, people pretended to believe, and

went so far as to protest against "such a numerous gathering of too excitable adherents."

To return to the Chamber and its President. Has the task of presiding at the debates become more arduous than it was in the days of Dupin, and is the increased burden the cause of all absence of wit on the part of Dupin's successors? Or have the legislators of France become less sensitive to a neatly worded reprimand? I am not prepared to say; but one thing is certain —the Presidency of the French Chamber is no sinecure at present, whatever it may have been of yore. The splitting up of the Chamber into a great number of small groups, ninety-nine of which will band together to hoot down a speaker of the hundredth who happens to displease them, undoubtedly entails a vast expenditure of physical exertion on the part of the chairman. I have seen even Gambetta leave his seat, tired, fagged, and unable to answer his friends in anything above a whisper. As an instance of the increasing difficulty of quelling the more and more frequently recurring disturbances, I may cite a story which I have on the best authority.

Unlike the members of our House of Commons, the French deputies not only sit bareheaded, but rarely, if ever, take their hats with them into the House. The accommodation provided for them is about as perfect as it can be;

the only drawbacks to their comfort are indifferent ventilation and defective acoustic conditions. They sit on leather benches with backs, arranged amphitheatre-wise, and divided into blocks by means of gangways. They have locked desks, provided with plentiful supplies of stationery: there is nothing to prevent them from attending to their correspondence while the business of the House is proceeding, a privilege of which they are not slow to avail themselves, for as a rule they pay but scant attention to the fast-succeeding or "superfluously lagging" speakers. A deputy chooses his seat at the beginning of the session, inserts his card in the gilt frame provided for that purpose against the back of the desk-ledge, and having thus marked his ownership, there is no need for him to repair to the Chamber at six in the morning on the day of a great debate with one hat on his head and another in his hand. Consequently, there is no headgear of any kind, and least of all of the chimney-pot order, to be found in the *salle des séances.* M. Tony Révillon or Under Secretary Labuze might a few years ago have had their grey sombreros stowed away in their desks, and M. Thivrier may at present have his cap in the pocket of his blouse; but neither of those *couvre-chefs* would have provided, or would provide, a sufficiently dignified covering for the President in the event of his wishing to leave the House to mark his disapproval of the

disorderly proceedings within; for it should be remembered that the essential manifestation of such disapproval lies in the donning of the hat. The official residence of the President of the Chamber being within the walls of the Palais-Bourbon, and custom having decreed that he shall wear evening dress, he, as a matter of course, proceeds to his chair bareheaded. Nevertheless, the necessity for having in readiness at all times a hat that would not disfigure the President's appearance and thus convert an exit, intended to be tragic, into a comic one, was not felt until a few years ago; and this in spite of the fact that on one occasion at Versailles, M. Grévy's head positively disappeared in the stove-pipe of that eminent professor of dramatic literature M. de Saint-Marc Girardin, who happened to be closest at hand when the usher rushed frantically into one of the lobbies in search of the required article. Nowadays, every President at his accession to office has one of his own hats conveyed to a recess within his reach. Truly a sign of the times!

By the time these notes appear in print, a hundred and five years (almost day for day) will have elapsed since the first truly representative French Parliament foregathered at Versailles. It was my original intention to attempt a more or less complete sketch not only of the moral and mental evolution that has marked that century of legislation, but to point out also the material changes

that have taken place since then. I frankly confess that this would have been a labour of love to me, for I flattered myself that I should have been able to interest the reader. However grandiloquent and austere a dame History may be, I feel confident that she never refuses to admit her more sprightly sister Anecdote to share some of her glory, provided the latter comes with decent credentials. I fancy I could have produced these, but unfortunately, there is again that question of space, and I must fain resign myself to give a merely cursory view of the present conditions. The opportunity is only deferred, not abandoned.

The President's chair and table, on the latter of which is fixed the afore-mentioned bell, are perched atop a towering structure that reminds one somewhat of the storied platforms used in the mediæval mystery plays. The structure rises at the base of the semicircular-shaped Chamber, and the space between it and the lowermost tier of seats is virtually the floor of the House. On a line with the President, though a little below him, sit the eight secretaries or clerks, four on each side. They are generally chosen from among the youngest members of the Chamber, in point of age. Immediately underneath the President's table is the rostrum, from which members address the House, for, as I have already observed, members rarely speak from their seats, except to refute a statement affecting them, and then the refutation

must not occupy more than a few moments. As a rule, there is no need to invite them to the rostrum, they go uninvited: they take to it as a duck to the water. "Ce qui distingue surtout cette Chambre, c'est l'appétence à la tribune," said the late M. Madier de Montjau some years ago, and the remark would hold as good to-day. *Appétence*, I may be permitted to point out, is not an ordinary word, but then, M. Madier de Montjau was not an ordinary man. According to the authorities, *appétence* means the instinctive desire which impels to an object calculated to satisfy a natural craving; in other terms, it is the first degree of appetite. Some of the most eminent Frenchmen of the nineteenth century, the great Villemain among others, dreaded the ordeal of addressing the Chamber; M. Dufaure, though perhaps not so terror-stricken as the former, ascended the steps of the tribune with reluctance, and left it with alacrity; Guizot, Berryer, and Thiers never spoke without there being an absolute necessity for their doing so, though the latter, when started, would go on as long as they let him. The majority of the members of the last three or four French Parliaments know nothing of such fear and reserve; they ascend the steps with alacrity, and descend with reluctance. Of course, there are exceptions; there are men whose grandfathers sat in the Parliaments of the First Republic, whose fathers occupied similar

positions in the legislatures of the Citizen-Monarchy and Second Republic, while they themselves seem to be "fixtures" in the "assemblies" of the Third Republic. And yet these representatives of three generations of legislators have invariably maintained a dignified silence. There is another category of "law-givers," described more than forty years ago by Michel de Bourges in one sentence. "The most difficult thing with deputies 'who do not speak' is to induce them to hold their tongues." There is the deputy who could not utter a score of succinct and intelligible sentences to save his life, but who every now and then executes a short solo in his own seat on well-known themes. If he be a Republican, the theme is, "What about the St. Bartholomew's massacres?" if a Legitimist, "What about the murder of Louis XVI.?" if a Bonapartist, "What about the execution of the hostages during the Commune?" and so forth. Among those I have known on both sides of the House should be mentioned apothecary Truelle, some time member for Nogent-le-Rotrou, the most pertinent illustration of that hackneyed saying that "Truth is stranger than fiction." But for his appearance on the scene after *Madame Bovary* and *Nos Bons Villageois* had been written, one might have suspected him of being the original of Flaubert's "Homais" and Sardou's "Floupin." I will not charge the memory of Truelle—for

he may be dead, for all I know—with having modelled his behaviour on that of the two fictitious personages just mentioned. I doubt whether Truelle ever opened a book in his life, except those relating to his profession; but he was uncommonly like those two comic, but not very sympathetic characters. There were also the two university professors, Compayré and Lenient, two of the most terrible "cases" of "constipated" knowledge I have ever met with, and their fellow-member Dr. Lionville, who, though a physician, was of no earthly use to them, seeing that he suffered from the same complaint. They, in common with the Monarchist paper manufacturer Laroche-Joubert, the sugar-refiner Villain, and a dozen others, had reduced Parliamentary eloquence, so far as they themselves were concerned, to one perpetual interjection. They were positively incurable, unlike their still more violent emulator, Dr. Vernhes, whose violence could be stopped by the mere exclamation on the part of the Chamber—"A la tribune!" He collapsed at once, and for the whole day. They are, however, "all goned afay, afay in de ewigkeit;" with the exception of the Comte de Douville-Maillefeu, who has developed into a speaker, but not of the kind he intended to be, inasmuch as his most serious remarks are always hailed with intense laughter.

The tribune — to come back to that place of torture to some, of delight to others—is reached by a double flight of steps, a very sensible arrangement under the circumstances, inasmuch as it prevents two political adversaries from coming into too close contact with one another while party passion is at its height; for, by the rules of the Chamber, the supporters and the opponents of a measure follow one another alternately, and the rule cannot be set aside except by a member voluntarily giving up his turn to another *whom he designates.* There is room enough in the rostrum for the speaker to stride up and down; and there are few French Parliamentary orators who stand perfectly still—the late Mgr. Freppel was one, M. Ribot is another; but most members remind one of a bear in a pit, or a tiger in a cage. The rostrum is made of mahogany; nevertheless, it is frequently alluded to as "the marble of the tribune." That in use in the Chamber of Deputies is the original rostrum of the Convention; that of the Senate dates from the Directory. It belonged to the Council of "the Five Hundred."

Below the tribune, and on a level with the floor, is a row of desks for the shorthand reporters; and a little in front of these a table for the *secrétaires-rédacteurs du compte-rendu analytique — Anglicé,* summary writers. From the latter's ranks, both in the Chamber and in the Senate, there have issued men whose names

have become household words in literature, and especially in dramatic literature, such as, for instance, M. Ludovic Halévy, M. Henri de la Pommeraye, M. Gastineau, &c. For these reports are not only carefully composed, but great pains are taken with their style. To begin with, these summaries, as well as the *verbatim* reports, go the round of the whole of the French press. In England every newspaper of importance, whether metropolitan or provincial, has not only its staff of shorthand reporters, but very frequently a summary writer of ability besides. This is not the case in France. I do not suppose there is a single paper there—not even *Le Temps*, the *Journal des Débats*, or *Le Figaro*—which has a summary writer proper, let alone a staff of stenographers of its own. Why should they? The *extenso* and "analytical" reports of the speeches are placed gratuitously at their disposal by the Chambers. The journalists who are packed into that box on the second tier in the Chamber are not sent by their respective editors to indite serious reports, but to give sketches—I had almost said caricatures—of the members, the fit of whose neckties, the shape of whose clothes, the peculiarities of whose diction, are of more importance to the general reader than their often endless speeches. These Yoricks have graver colleagues, who rarely condescend to notice such trifles; but they never make their

appearance in the journalists' box. They remain in the Salle des Pas-Perdus; they are the real newsmongers, and have no equals among other nations, not even among Americans, for worming a secret out of a deputy. When I was in active service in Paris, there was Hément of *Le Temps* and *Le Rappel*, Legrand of the *Débats*, Toulouze, who proved such a formidable rival to the "Agence Havas," and two or three others, whose political articles were not only literary treats, but masterly *exposés* of facts, whose mere paragraphs contained more solid information, conveyed in the most brilliant fashion, than columns upon columns of *verbatim* report.

Some of their successors and younger colleagues are to the full as able as they; their merits, however, should not blind us to the sterling value of the official shorthand reporters and summary writers, who discharge a very difficult task with great tact, invariable courtesy, and unimpeachable honesty. In the life of one of the two greatest statesmen of the century—I am alluding to Prince Bismarck—there is an incident which one would hesitate to believe but for his own authority. I am quoting from memory, and cannot therefore give the exact date, but I am certain of the main fact. One day in the early sixties, Bismarck made a speech in which several very highly placed personages were treated with but scant courtesy, and things said

that had been perhaps better left unsaid. Half-an-hour later the proof of the shorthand report was submitted to him, and to his great surprise he failed to find the expressions he had made use of. "What's the meaning of this?" he asked of the chief of the shorthand writers. "Well, your Excellency," stammered the latter, "I felt not quite certain whether you would like to have these statements maintained in sober earnest." "But I was in sober earnest or"—and here an idea flashed on Bismarck's mind —"were you under the impression, perhaps, that I had lunched too well?" The official turned very red. "Well, Excellency," he said, after a short pause, "that was the impression, for I had never seen your Excellency so excited before."

The shorthand writers at the Palais-Bourbon would not be swayed by such considerations; least of all would they be swayed by meaner motives; and the material temptations to garble reports have not been wanting in bygone days, and, I daresay, are not wanting now. It has happened, not once but a dozen times, that a speaker, becoming aware of the disastrous effect of a sentence on his audience, and foreseeing one still more disastrous if the sentence be allowed to go forth to the country at large, apart from the impression it might produce upon his constituents, has endeavoured to have that sen-

tence expunged from the reports, and left no stone unturned to that end. A notable attempt of that kind was M. Emile Ollivier's, after he had accepted war "with a light heart." But though he was the Prime Minister, the stenographers literally "stuck to their text;" and the sentence remains as a proof of his share in a transaction the particulars of which I intend to thrash out one day, in spite of the displeasure of the ex-Empress of the French, and the utterly ignorant remarks of her would-be chivalrous but simply ridiculous defender, Sir John Lintorn Simmons, who, field-marshal or not, has as much knowledge of *les dessous de la politique française* as a hurdy-gurdy man of counterpoint. I repeat, the sentence remains, not only as a proof of his share in the transaction, but as sterling and more gratifying evidence of the integrity of a body of men who are by no means overpaid.

Next in importance to the sixteen shorthand reporters, who relieve one another every two minutes, come the three quæstors, one of whom is generally seated behind the President, who consults him on points of order. Their importance comes home to the deputies more materially than that of the scribes; for without those three officials the deputies would freeze in winter, be stifled in summer, parch with thirst at all seasons, and not find a morsel wherewith to satisfy their hunger. They are virtually the house stewards of

the Palais-Bourbon, and the police of the House itself. Of the recent quæstors, I have only known one, M. Bizarelli, and him but slightly. But I have known some famous quæstors in my time—MM. Madier de Montjau, Martin Nadaud, Baze, Margaine, and Colonel Denfert-Rochereau. Ever since the quæstorship was instituted, it has been the custom to give one of the three appointments to a retired "army man"—subject, of course, to his being a member of the Chamber like the others. It was supposed that, in the event of an attack on the Legislature from the outside by an ambitious would-be dictator backed by troops, the erstwhile officer's influence on assailants and defenders would be sufficiently strong to nip such an attack in the bud. The fallacy of that assumption was amply proved on the morning of the 2nd December 1851, when Colonel Leflô was simply taken like a rat in a trap, while the quæstor who offered the stoutest resistance and gave the greatest trouble was M. Baze, a lawyer. Though the tradition with regard to the necessity of having a military man among the quæstors remained unimpaired, M. Baze was henceforth the "quæstor elect" with the Republicans; and as a matter of course, the appointment was waiting for him in the National Assembly. When in due time he became a Senator, he at the same time became a quæstor at the Luxembourg, as he had been at the Palais-Bourbon. He was not an amiable

man in the discharge of his functions, and was cordially disliked by every journalist whose duty compelled him to come in contact with him; but he was honest and upright to a fault, and if such a small matter as the annual saving of three or four thousand pounds be of any consequence in a budget like that of France, M. Baze's statue ought to adorn the refreshment rooms both at the Palais-Bourbon and at the Luxembourg. Apart from the lesson of thrift it conveys, the story of M. Baze's reform is worth telling as an illustration of the difference between our own Parliamentary customs and those of our nearest neighbours.

It was almost at the outset of the Parliamentary *régime* in France that the payment of members was decided on. A little over three months after the States-General at Versailles had begun their labours, the Duc de Liancourt moved that the deputies should be granted a stipend; that stipend to be uniform for the "three orders" of the States. The proposal could not very well emanate from a deputy whose need of such a stipend was apparent, and the Duc de Liancourt's position absolutely forbade such a suspicion; yet, odd to relate, even those who were known to be in urgent need of such assistance listened to the motion with the utmost indifference, and not a member rose to second it. Nevertheless, it was carried,

and the amount of the "indemnity" fixed in committee at 18 francs per day. During the Directory the stipend was increased to 28 francs per day. The Consulate reduced it by a trifle, namely, by 4 francs 50 centimes per week, the annual sum being 10,000 francs per annum, which figure was maintained during the Empire, though there is a slight divergence of opinion about this. The divergence does not affect the drift of the present notes. Under the Restoration and the Citizen-Monarchy the deputies gave their services gratuitously; but a decree of the Constituent Assembly of '48 restored their stipend to them at the rate of 25 francs per day.

It will be patent to the reader by this time that I have not the smallest pretension to "pose" as a historian, but that I love to wander into the by-paths of history. Perhaps it is because I have not got a coach-and-four, or a thoroughbred on which to prance on the highways. I have always considered the payment of members of Parliament a mistake from many points of view, and curiously enough, in my frequent chats with the French democracy—outside the Chamber—I have found the majority to agree with my view of the question. Anyhow, the Parisian proletariat of the Second Republic were never weary of holding those "salaried representatives" up to ridicule and contempt. They bestowed upon them the epithet of "five

and twenty franckers" (*les vingt-cinq francs*). This is not a mere assertion transmitted by irresponsible observers; it is a fact vouched for by acknowledged and interested authorities, not the least among them being M. Odilon Barrot, who is assuredly not open to the suspicion of having wished to besmirch deliberately the Republican *régime* to which, in a great measure, he was affiliated. Well, in his "Posthumous Memoirs" he tells a very pertinent story. In common with a great many other deputies, he was arrested on the 2nd December 1851, and on the morning of the 3rd taken to the fortress of Vincennes in company with some of his fellow-prisoners. They were conveyed in prison vans, not a very generous or dignified proceeding on the part of the promoters of the *Coup d'État*, but *à la guerre, comme à la guerre*, and no other vehicles were available. "As we were being driven along the Faubourg Saint-Antoine the workmen were already leaving their homes for the workshops. They inquired of one another what these conveyances accompanied by such powerful escorts might contain. "Ah!" they remarked, when told who we were, "they are the five and twenty franckers, who are going to be put under lock and key (*qu'on va coffrer*); serves them right." This was all the interest shown to the "representatives elected by universal suffrage by the population

of that faubourg so notorious and dreaded on account of its democratic passions."

So far M. Odilon Barrot. Now for the sequel, or rather for the various sequels—and the play is not at an end yet. Sequel 1. While the vans continued their journey, several deputies of the Extreme Left—only one of whom is known to Englishmen, Esquiros, who wrote the best book on England ever written by a Frenchman—were holding a meeting at a small hall ordinarily used for dancing and high jinks. An hour or so afterwards they went into the street, girt with their scarves of office, trying to stir the people into revolt, and shouting "Aux barricades; aux barricades." "Ah, *ouiche*"—I beg the printer not to put *oui*, for it is not the same thing—"Ah, *ouiche*," quoth a woman of the people, who had caught up the epithet "five and twenty francker" in the course of the morning, "to be sure, our men are going to get themselves killed for the sake of your five and twenty francs a day." The taunt was uttered loudly enough for every one to hear it; only one of the deputies, Jean-Baptiste Baudin, a rising surgeon, took it up. "Is that it?" he said bitterly. "Well, I am going to show you how a five and twenty francker can meet his death." He was as good as his word; half-an-hour later he fell—a bullet had struck him right in the forehead.

Sequel 2. Seventeen years elapsed, and the

tragic but somewhat theatrical death of Baudin was, if not forgotten, scarcely alluded to, except by those who had been near him on that fatal morning. I was never very long away from Paris during the last three years of the Second Empire, and, though seeing a good deal of all sorts and conditions of men, and especially all sorts and conditions of Republicans, I do not recollect a single allusion to it. Of course, the story was known to me, as it was known to thousands who were not absolutely ignorant of the history of France during the fifties and sixties, but that was all. I will prove my statement directly. All at once the name of Baudin was on every one's lips, the newspapers were full of articles about him, and crowds of people repaired to the Montmartre cemetery. But so utterly neglected had Baudin's memory become that his grave was found with difficulty. What was the cause of this tardy apotheosis? Simply the publication of a book which recounted the well-known story of Baudin's self-sacrifice, with sundry embellishments not founded upon facts, and certain facts distorted for the sake of embellishment. I have the book by me; I bought it within a month of its appearance, and the title-page bears the inscription "Seventh Edition."[1]

[1] "Paris en Décembre 1851. Etude Historique sur la Coup d'État," par Eugène Ténot, redacteur du Siècle, auteur de "la Province en Décembre 1851." Paris, Armand Le Chevalier, 61 Rue de Richelieu.

Well, I have no hesitation in saying that M. Ténot exaggerated as much in 1868 as did in 1884 M. de Maupas, whose *Mémoirs sur le Second Empire* I had the honour to translate, and to whom I am, moreover, indebted for most of the rough notes that constituted the foundation of "An Englishman in Paris." How they came into his possession, and from his into mine, together with the name of the Englishman who entrusted them to him, I will relate one day, not very distant perhaps. At present it is sufficient to say that the Englishman himself would not recognise them in their actual shape, were he to revisit the glimpses of the moon. The whole of these notes barely covered three quires of note-paper, written very closely, it is true, but only on one side. If, after that, I am not the author of the book, Stephenson is not the inventor of the locomotive, for he did not make his own materials, any more than I did. Enough about myself; I return for a moment to Baudin, previous to returning to Quæstor Baze, of whom I have by no means lost sight.

The condition of Baudin's grave struck most of the Opposition journals as a disgraceful injustice, and forthwith they opened subscription lists with the view of repairing the neglect and placing a suitable monument on his tomb. I need not go into too many particulars. Among the most ardent advocates of the project was

Delescluze, the editor of *Le Reveil*, and he, with many other editors, was indicted before the Sixth Correctional Chamber for "having attempted to foment civil strife, and to discredit the Government of the Emperor by means of seditious writings," &c., &c.

In those days there might have been seen at the Café de Madrid, on the Boulevard Montmartre, a very Jewish-looking man, whose age it was rather difficult to determine at a first glance. Careless, not to say slovenly, in his attire, and that attire never in the best of taste nor in the best of conditions, he gave one at one time the impression of being much older than he seemed, at another of being much younger than he really was. That man was Léon Gambetta, the friend and to a certain extent the *protégé* of Ranc and Spuller, the chief contributors to *Le Nain Jaune*. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, no one at that period foresaw Gambetta's future part in history; for the simple reason that even as late as '66 and '67 few foresaw the ignominious collapse of the Second Empire, and these few certainly did not visit the Café de Madrid, and, least of all, come in contact with the ill-dressed, loud-mannered, though fundamentally generous and good-natured, young barrister. Nevertheless, he was not altogether obscure; he had figured with credit to himself as counsel for the defence in several minor "press prosecutions"

instituted by the Empire, and was looked upon in the Quartier-Latin as a probable successor to Crémieux and Favre. Politically, his star was not even discernible on the horizon, though he himself endeavoured to make it sufficiently patent that he would rise politically or not at all. By which I mean that he never hesitated to show his intention of making his profession a means to an end, and that end a political one. I do not say that his wildest dreams of ambition showed him the Dictatorship as he virtually enjoyed it for several months, the Dictatorship he was so loath to relinquish, and which ever and anon he tried to resume. What his ambitious dreams showed him was the Liberal Premiership under the Empire, just as Mirabeau's ambition had shown him the Premiership under Louis XVI. That this ambition would have been realised but for the fall of the Empire, there can be not the least doubt in the minds of those who watched his career before that fall, and who remember his speeches at Belleville, in March 1870. It is not libelling M. Emile Ollivier to say that as a politician of the "purely fighting kind," he never came within a measurable distance of Gambetta, and he fought himself into a Premiership; why should not Gambetta have done the same? They started under almost similar conditions.

At the moment of which I treat, however, Gambetta's political star, I repeat, was not visible

on the horizon; but it was soon to flash upon the world. The "Baudin prosecution" gave him his chance. The morning after his speech for the defence of Delescluze he was famous; next year he made his first appearance in Parliament; and having been baulked of the opportunity to defend the Empire as its Premier, he embraced the opportunity of kicking it out of his way when it was down. In the latter years of his life Gambetta was very fond of calling Grévy a "Prudhomme-Machiavel." It is the parable of the mote and the beam over again. One of M. Prudhomme's peculiarities, according to Henri Monnier, who created him, is his readiness to defend the institutions of his country, and if needs be, to attack them. If Gambetta played the dual part of assailant and defender with less diabolical ingenuity than the Florentine statesman, and greater *aplomb* than the ridiculous *bourgeois*, it was because he was intellectually below the one and above the other. Be this as it may; to those who have followed me in this somewhat long digression, it will be clear that but for the revival of the deputy's stipend under the Second Republic, there would have been no political Gambetta, and perhaps no Third Republic. One of the innumerable instances in history of small causes producing great effects.

The Second Empire treated its legislators in a more lavish way than the Second Republic. The

stipend of 9000 francs per annum was increased to 12,500 francs for six months, and 2500 for each month exceeding that term. In addition to this, the cost of the refreshment rooms was entirely borne by the State, and the "inner legislator" so well looked after, that the £2000 per annum set apart for that purpose for the Chamber had invariably to be supplemented by a like sum. The most expensive wines and *liqueurs*, the daintiest dishes, were to be had for the asking. There are numberless anecdotes of deputies absolutely living in the *buvette* during the sessions, and not spending a halfpenny for their food until dinner-time. This went on until the end of 1871, at which time some members, more conscientious than the rest, concluded that it was scarcely consistent with their dignity to burden the nation with their keep, and the committee of ways and means of the Chamber introduced a bill providing for the maintenance of the refreshment room by the deputies themselves. Upon the face of it the measure was so equitable that the Chamber did not dare to throw it out, but the majority, who objected to pay for their gorging, defeated the real drift of the proposed reform by voting the magnificent contribution of five francs per month for each deputy, to be disbursed, of course, by the deputy himself.

In those days the number of deputies was considerably less than it is now; fortunately, for at

the end of the first three months there was a deficit of 8000 francs. It was no use to try to amend the new bill, least of all, to appeal to the deputies' generosity. Then Quæstor Baze hit upon a novel idea, a flash of genius as it were. He conferred with his two colleagues, and next day all the expensive wines and spirits were effaced from the list. The pastry, which would have done credit to a Rumpelmayer or a Rouzé, disappeared at the same time; the *brioches* were not only reduced in size, but made more "stodgy;" the sandwiches, on the other hand, gained in thickness—that is, the bread thereof, but the meat became a mere film. One facetious deputy said that they reminded him of Sarah Bernhardt on a cold winter's night—"all wraps." Of course, there was an outcry, an indignant protest, but the quæstors stood firm; they showed the accounts, and Quæstor Baze is said to have lapsed into relevant, witty poetry on that day, the only instance on record of his having forsaken the safe road of prose. He struck an attitude, and declaimed La Fontaine's lines:—

"La cigale ayant chanté
Tout l'été,
Se trouva fort dépourvue
Quand la bise fut venue."

The argument was unanswerable; the deputies had to give in, and at present the quæstors manage to make both ends meet, nearly, though not quite;

for their contribution of twopence per day entitles the deputies to a practically unlimited supply of non-alcoholic drinks of all kinds, refreshing cordials at which the ordinary Englishman would probably sneer, but which Frenchmen largely imbibe at their *cafés*. In addition to this, there is excellent claret, at the rate of about ten bottles a day; equally excellent beer in unrestricted quantity, though it costs nearly as much as the wine; beef-tea; coffee, with its accompanying small glass of cognac; delicious rolls and butter, *brioches*, sandwiches, tea and milk, &c., &c. The quantity of beef allowed for the beef-tea is twenty-five pounds per day; the milk is restricted to eight quarts; the rolls and *brioches* to a hundred and fifty of each. But there is ordinary bread "*à discrétion*," *ad libitum*, as we, with our fondness for Latin phrases, have it, which ordinary bread means, of course, the best French bread; nor are there any questions asked about butter, coffee, tea, and the rest.

Thus far the management of the commissariat department at the Palais-Bourbon. The difference in other matters between the latter and St. Stephen's is not less striking. I have already pointed out that the French deputy chooses his seat at the beginning of the session, and retains possession of it throughout. Of course he starts by selecting a position among the group or groups to which he belongs. At his *début* he

is generally taken in hand by a friend or sponsor, who asks him to which group he means to belong. When Lamartine made his first appearance in the Chamber of Deputies in 1832, he was asked with which party he was going to throw in his lot. "With the *parti social*," was the answer. This did not mean the socialistic party, as the term is understood at present, but, whatever it meant, the term had never been heard in a Parliamentary assembly. "Social?" remarked his interlocutor, "what does it mean?—it is merely a word." "No, it is more than that—it's an idea." "Maybe; but where are you going to sit? There seems to be no room for you in any part of the Chamber." "Very well, then I'll hang on by the ceiling." A French deputy must belong to a group or groups, for many members belong to two or three different factions; for instance, a man may be affiliated to the Republican Union and the Radical Left at the same time, and so forth. I spoke a little while ago of the attempt of M. Pradié to found a "Cave of Adullam," but M. Pradié would have felt highly indignant if any one had designated himself and his couple of followers by any other name than that of a group. The Biblical term was never thought of, albeit that a journalist said—"It is not a group, but a few political wallflowers on a sofa."

Roughly speaking, then, the Chamber may be divided into three sections; I cannot call them

parties, and will not call them factions. There are the Moderate Republicans, who sit in the Centre; the Advanced Republicans, who occupy the Left, facing the President; and the Reactionaries, *i.e.*, the partisans of the Monarchical and Imperialist *régimes*, who are enthroned on the Right. Unless some very startling miracle occur, the latter are not likely to see one of their own adherents included in a ministry; but even if this were to occur, say if the whole of an Administration were to be composed of Reactionaries or Advanced Republicans, the various sections would retain their respective positions in the Chamber, for there is no such custom as changing sides; the permanent ministerial bench is the lowermost row of seats in the centre of the House. With the exception of the Ministers for War and Naval Affairs, a minister must necessarily belong to one of the Chambers, the former need not. The soldier or sailor, while he retains his commission, is not eligible for the Chamber of Deputies, though he may sit in the Senate. A minister has the right to speak in either House, but he can only vote with that to which he belongs. His acceptance of office does not entail his presenting himself for re-election, and the same rule holds good with Under-Secretaries of State; but the bestowal of any other salaried appointment under Government necessitates on the part of

the recipient a fresh appeal to his constituents. Certain functionaries and dignitaries are ineligible in the constituencies of the province or "department"—to use the modern topographical designation—in which they exercise their functions; for instance, the late Mgr. Freppel, Bishop of Angers, could have represented no part of the Department of the Maine-et-Loire, and even if he had vacated his see, would have had to wait for six months after his resignation before he could have presented himself for election. The same restrictions apply to nearly all the occupants of the Bench, University and scholastic officials, prefects, &c., &c.

The system of voting is altogether different from that of the House of Commons. To begin with, there is no "pairing," there are no division lobbies, the Patronage Secretary or "whip" does not exist. On each member's desk there lie two packets of tickets—one blue, the other white; they are used for voting if necessary, They bear the member's name. The white mean "Yes," the blue "No." These tickets are not always used; for there are at least two modes of voting without them, namely, that *à mains levées* (by a show of hands), and that *par assis et levé* (by standing up or keeping seated). Each of these modes may be repeated twice and no more; if, after that, the result is still considered open to doubt, the *scrutin public* (a division in due form) is

resorted to, though even then the secret vote may be claimed, provided a written request to that effect be handed to the President; it has to be signed by fifty members if in the Chamber, by twenty if in the Senate. In both these cases the voting urns are carried round by the ushers—the members drop their tickets into them; in the one case the names of the voters are read out by the President, in the other they remain a secret. But this latter way is rarely demanded, except on a question affecting a member personally. Finally, there is the *appel nominal*, which may be secret or the reverse. It is never insisted on except in important divisions when the supporters or opponents of a measure wish to prevent voting by proxy—an established though altogether illegal custom, which is greatly facilitated by friends sitting together as they do. The *appel nominal* provokes a good deal of grumbling, for it wastes much time; each member being obliged to leave his seat as his name is called out, walk up to the tribune, where the urns are standing, and record his vote there.

This expedient, however much disliked by the majority of the deputies themselves, is rather relished by the audience, especially by the female portion thereof; it provides an *entr'acte* which allows of their admirers paying them a visit, for even now the female element is very much *en évidence* in the first tier of galleries of the

Chamber. The *grandes dames de par la troisième république* follow the example of the *grandes dames de par le monde* of the last years of Louis XVI.; they repair habitually to the Legislature, but the motive of the former's presence there is probably altogether different from that of her predecessor. In the last decade of the eighteenth century the fair sex came to criticise; in that of the nineteenth they come to admire. I have already pointed out that the appearance in the public thoroughfares of the erstwhile Nana, or mere *petite bourgeoise*, who has been pitchforked by circumstances into high places, is fraught with certain discomforts to herself, and perhaps to her husband, who may be a shining light under the present *régime*. The Boulevards, the Bois and Longchamps, having been made unavailable for the display of "ravishing toilettes," Madame la Ministre is compelled to fall back upon such resorts as may guarantee her from the disagreeable intrusion of her former familiars. The Chamber is pretty safe in that respect. *La grande cocotte* goes thither occasionally, but her presence presents no danger from Madame la Ministre's point of view. As a rule, Madame la Ministre and her companions are somewhat too demonstrative in their expressions of approval or the reverse, in spite of the regulations that prohibit manifestations of public opinion. Madame la Ministre and her companions are utterly

unable to grasp the real drift of the proceedings, but they know when they are bored or amused, and do not scruple to say so aloud. Their only critical faculty is exercised on the personal appearance of the stream of fast-succeeding deputies in the tribune, and on the various beverages placed by the speakers' side by the assiduous attendant specially told off for that duty. A whole essay might be written on him and on the decoctions he dispenses, but again, I have not sufficient space at my disposal. I know, however, that he is frequently consulted by letter by Madame la Ministre and Madame la Députée. The men of importance are almost sure to find their decoctions handed to them at these ladies' receptions. If there be nothing to criticise or to observe for them in that way, the *grandes dames de par la république* carry on their conversations in a tone loud enough to be heard in the journalists' box.

As a rule, the majority of French women err in that respect. In 1814, President Lainé was obliged to suspend the debates because the voices of the ladies drowned those of the speakers, and because the crowd, unable to find room in the galleries, invaded the Chamber. A member proposed to exclude the female element once for all. There was a general cry of indignation, and M. Héricourt de Thury, to whom France owes the restoration of the

Palais des Thermes and of the Hôtel de Cluny, and to whom archæologists and antiquarians of all nations are still more greatly indebted, pleaded the cause of the culprits by reminding his hearers that the ancient Gauls consulted their womankind in their deliberations. In 1820 there was a similar attempt to close the Chamber to women, which proved equally unsuccessful. At the National Assembly at Versailles, Princess Troubetzkoi never failed to make her appearance when M. Thiers was inscribed on the list of speakers, and Madame Edmond Adam was equally punctual when Gambetta was on the programme. Mmes. de Rainneville and d'Harcourt did not even pretend to discriminate; they attended nearly every meeting. All these gentlewomen have disappeared. The last time I saw Madame de Rainneville was at the trial of Madame Clovis Hugues for the murder of the pettifogging lawyer Morin, who had slandered her. Madame de Rainneville was with Princess Hohenlohe, the then German ambassadress. I was enabled to render both a slight service, and on my attempting to resume my place among the public (there was no place reserved for journalists), was jeered at for being polite to a German and to an aristocrat. I should not be surprised if a similar demonstration took place at the Chamber some day, and the woman of birth and breeding is probably not anxious to incur

such a risk, so she leaves the coast free to Madame la Ministre and Madame la Députée, who, at any rate, will not be the objects of hostile remarks from the democrats occupying part of the second gallery. They may be objects of envy, but that is all.

I think it was the Earl of Beaconsfield who said that "no speech, however eloquent, ever influenced a division;" the French deputy of the last forty or fifty years would seem to have made up his mind not even to be tempted into being converted. When, in 1848, Eugène Sue, full of philanthropic and democratic enthusiasm, and with his convictions strong upon him, took his seat among the "Lefts," he seated himself on the first day of the session by the side of Victor Hugo. While he chatted with his neighbour, the Chamber was discussing a bill of some kind. When the measure was put to the vote, the poet, to Sue's great surprise, held up his hand, then rose from his seat and voted. "Did you hear what the last speaker said?" asked Sue. "Not a single syllable of it," was the reply. "Then how can you possibly vote?" "Oh, that's easy enough. Do you see that little gentleman with spectacles, facing you?" "Yes." "Well, it's he who virtually tells me which way to vote. As we are invariably of a different opinion, I remain seated if he gets up, and when he remains seated I get up on trust. He listens for both

of us." Only those who have been compelled to follow the debates in the French Chamber will be able to understand the drift underlying Victor Hugo's system of getting some one to listen for him, for though French Parliamentary oratory is on an average superior in fluency, diction, and elegance to English, it breeds, in the long run, a painful weariness. The words and sentences "come in procession," as George Eliot would have said; they neither stumble nor try to pick themselves up on the speaker's lips; there are no straggling adjectives and laggard verbs, but the *ensemble*, admirably arranged as it is, lacks humour and thoughtfulness. In the whole of the present Chamber, there is not a single speaker even approaching distantly such a man as the late Ernest Renan. With Ernest Picard, Thiers, Gambetta, and Freppel, the race of Parliamentary speakers cultivating the bantering style of which Beaconsfield, Eugène Rouher, Windthorst, and even Bismarck were such masters, seems to have died out. Clemenceau, when a deputy, could flout and jeer and hit harder, perhaps, than any Parliamentary debater alive; but there would not have been a drop of the milk of human kindness in an hour's speech, if he had made one of that duration. The Comte de Mun is almost sublime every now and then, but nearly always over the heads of three-fourths of the Chamber. Floquet is on an oratorical rocking-horse, and Brisson on

Balaam's ass; Douville-Maillefeu lets off fireworks, but before one has time to recognise one's bearings, everything is dark again. Edouard Lockroy, like the late Paul Bert, is always in a rage, and inflicts a long speech for the sake of launching two or three epigrams. Both Goblet and Ribot have the making of good orators in them if they would but divest themselves of the idea that the whole of Europe is hanging on their words. In short, Clemenceau's lieutenant (Camille Pelletan), Paul de Cassagnac, Léon Renault, Andrieux, and a few others, in all a half-dozen, alone are worth listening to from the Englishman's point of view.

CHAPTER X.

Three Presidents of the Republic—A test of the popularity of an eminent man in France—The theatres as a barometer in times of public excitement—The receipts at the theatres on the day of Mirabeau's death—On the day of Gambetta's funeral—On the day of Thiers' funeral—Not a single kindly note about Adolphe Thiers—An epitaph attributed to M. Victorien Sardou—Thiers and Louis Philippe—A *mot* of Alphonse Karr—The *Charivari's* opinion of Thiers—The real aim of Thiers' life—Old Prince Metternich on Thiers—Thiers and Mac-Mahon during the Commune—Thiers and Louis Napoleon—Louis Napoleon's opinion—A conversation between these two—Thiers and Mr. Senior—His dread of Mr. Senior's publication—His family—Mac-Mahon—Madame de Mac-Mahon—The story of the Comté de Chambord's famous manifesto—Mac-Mahon's story of the *plébiscite* of 1852—Mac-Mahon's genealogy—Mac-Mahon the real founder of the Third Republic "in spite of himself"—Mac-Mahon's title—Mac-Mahon's modesty.

I CAN only speak of three out of the four Presidents who have occupied the Elysée-Bourbon since the nominal foundation of the Third Republic—I have already pointed out that there is a discrepancy between the nominal and virtual foundations. M. Sadi Carnot is a stranger to me, although I have spoken to him once or twice when he was the *fidus Achates* of M. Daniel Wilson, the son-in-law of M. Carnot's immediate predecessor in the Presidential chair. I know

nothing of M. Carnot's mental attainments, but I believe him to be an honest, straightforward gentleman in the best but at the same time narrowest acceptation of the word. In fact, I believe him to be too honest and straightforward for the arduous task he has undertaken. In that respect he is like the late Marshal Mac-Mahon, though their honesty manifests itself in different ways.

If I had to sum up the motives of the four Presidents for accepting office in as few lines as possible, I would do it as follows:—M. Thiers wanted both the power and the money. Marshal Mac-Mahon wanted neither the power nor the money. M. Grévy was indifferent to the power, but anxious for the money. M. Carnot is indifferent to the money, but likes the power.

In France the receipts at the theatres may be taken as a kind of thermometer or barometer of public opinion. "Next morning, Monday (Feb. 21, '48), there seemed to be a lull in the storm, but on the Tuesday the signs of the coming hurricane were plainly visible on the horizon. I had occasion to pass before the Comédie-Française. The ominous, black-lettered slip of yellow paper, with the word *Relâche*, was pasted across the evening's bill. I remembered the words of my old tutor—'When the Comédie-Française shuts its doors in perilous times, it is like the battening down of the hatches in dirty weather.'

There is mischief brewing. . . . I saw little on the Wednesday night (Feb. 23, '48) of what was going on. Being tired of wandering, and feeling no inclination for bed, I turned into the Gymnase. There was Bressant, and Rose Cheri, and Arnal; I should surely be able to spend a few pleasant hours. But, alack and alas! the house presented a very doleful appearance—dead-heads to a man, and very few of these; people who, if they could not fiddle themselves, like Nero when Rome was burning, would go to hear fiddling under no matter what circumstances, provided they were not asked to pay. . . . I did not stay long. . . . When I got to the Boulevard Montmartre I turned into the Théâtre des Variétés. They were playing *Le Suisse de Marly*, *Le Marquis de Lauzun*, *Les Extrêmes se touchent*, and *Les Vieux Péchés*. I had seen the second piece and the last piece at least a dozen times, but was always ready to see them again, for the sake of Virginie Déjazet in the one, of Bouffé in the other. The house, like the Gymnase, was almost empty."[1]

On the day of Mirabeau's death, though he had held no official position, the theatres closed their doors; on the day of Gambetta's funeral, the receipts at the theatres fell considerably; on the day of Thiers' funeral, the theatres were crowded from floor to ceiling. The nation was not affected by his death one way or the other,

[1] "An Englishman in Paris," vol. i. ch. x.

and it is very doubtful whether, with the exception of his widow, his sister-in-law, and his old friend Mignet, there was a single Frenchman or Frenchwoman who shed a tear. Among the many unpublished anecdotes relating to Adolphe Thiers which I have in my possession, there is not one testifying to a generous action on his part. Among the opinions respecting him, expressed by men of widely-divergent temperament, character, and political bias, there is not a single note of unqualified praise, except from those who, in their self-fed enthusiasm at the advent of the Third Republic, constituted themselves his blind panegyrists, conveniently forgetful that this foundation of the Republic was with him only a means to an end—that end, arbitrary power.

> "Ci-gît un très fin politique,
> Qui, pour régner tout seul, fonda la République,"

wrote, a few days after his death, a very keen observer, who was supposed to be none other than M. Victorien Sardou. It would be difficult to sum up Thiers' so-called patriotic aspirations more concisely and more truthfully. The two lines contain, as it were, the condensed criticism on all his actions for more than forty-five years. No French statesman of modern days was ever more impatient of contradiction than he; he meant to be the absolute master, and when he became the Prime Minister of Louis Philippe,

he immediately set to work to reduce the King's influence to zero, nay, "to hide the monarch up his sleeve" by the specious formula, "The King reigns but does not govern," which drew from Alphonse Karr the remark, "Il règne comme la corniche règne autour d'un plafond." It is almost impossible to translate the sentence literally. "He reigns as a cornice runs round a ceiling" does not convey the clever satire of the original, the gist of which is that the ceiling would be just as useful without the cornice, though, of course, not so ornamental. Thiers, however, meant not only to be the ceiling, but claimed the right to detach himself from the cornice, and from the rest of the constitutional fabric as well, whenever he felt disposed to crush his ministerial colleagues and the deputies themselves for opposing his will. Initiative, these colleagues had none; Thiers meddled with everything, encroached upon everybody's privilege, was *positively* ubiquitous, and made himself "a general nuisance." "If I were to put my shoes in the chimney on Christmas eve, I should find Thiers ensconced in one next morning," said Louis Philippe. One day the King revolted. "Seeing that it is to be duel between us," he exclaimed, "I'll accept it; but remember that, though you may pass your sword through my body, you will very likely perish by the very wound you will inflict upon me." This is the

same man who in '72, at a dinner-party given in his honour by the Duc d'Aumale, began his little speech by alluding to "the children of his well-beloved King" . . . &c., &c. Justice compels me to admit that "the words stuck in his throat." It was one of the two occasions in his life when his "glibness deserted him;" the other was on the day of his reception as a member of the Académie. For *Le Charivari* had summed up Thiers' truly marvellous "gift of the gab" in its first number, and in one short paragraph. "The Minister of the Interior is no doubt the man who in a given time can 'spout' the greatest number of words and 'squirt' the largest number of verbal 'blue-bottles' upon the air. He is, moreover, the man who can talk for the longest period without taking the trouble to think. As a rule, one idea is all-sufficient for him; one idea and a tumbler of water with a lump of sugar in it. With these, M. Thiers will go on 'prating' for twenty-four hours at 'a stretch,' like the skilful wire-drawer who from an ounce of metal will produce twenty-four leagues of wire."

To return for a moment to Thiers, and to that particular period of his career which may well have been the turning-point of his so-called political convictions. Finding himself unable to "bully" the King—there is not another word for it, though with a shrill treble like his it sounds somewhat ridiculous—he bethought

himself of a *régime* in which there would be no King to bully, in other words, of a Republic with himself as the protector and absolute master. Old Prince Metternich had an inkling of this when he called him "*un Napoléon civil*," and to show that time brought no modification to the Austrian diplomatist's mind on the subject, we have but to turn to his despatches to Count Apponyi in the year '40, in which he writes that "M. Thiers likes to be compared to Napoleon." "Guizot is too apt to confound doctrines with principles," he says elsewhere; "Thiers, on the other hand, bends both to what he considers his personal interest."

Thiers was compelled to bide his time, for his prestige, however great, did not affect the masses, who remembered the part he had played during "the three glorious days" in July 1830, when he had baulked them of the Republic they fondly expected to see arise on the ruins of the Bourbon monarchy; and, short of these masses, no civilian, not even in France, can organise a revolt or revolution against the established powers unless he have the army at his back. At no period of Thiers' life would the army have so much as budged at his bidding. But for the timely presence of Mac-Mahon in March '71, the Commune might, nay, probably would, have ended differently. It is not libelling that honest soldier's memory to say that, having been absolved from

his allegiance to the Empire, he would not have lent himself to the establishment of a republic if Thiers had not in some way made it patent to him that this republic was only to be a stage on the road to a monarchical restoration.

Be this as it may, it is very certain that in '48 Thiers did nothing to prevent the overthrow of his "well-beloved King," that, in fact, he aggravated the situation by refusing to form a Ministry when Louis Philippe requested him to do so on the evening of the 23rd February, and that the King commented upon the fact, though more in sorrow than in anger. Louis Philippe subsequently admitted that he was "a fool for his pains." I am quoting his own words. "I was virtually like the man who appeals to a so-called friend to prevent a divorce between himself and his wife, while the friend is only bent upon one thing—to marry the woman the moment she is free from the other." It tallies with the remark made twenty-seven years later by a keen observer of Thiers' career for many years, M. Charles Merruau, the editor of *Le Constitutionnel*—"Thiers meant to found a Conservative Republic, and to marry *her* in the capacity of President."

The projected nuptials—projected on one side at any rate—were knocked on the head by the advent of another suitor — Louis Napoleon. Thiers gave way, for the new *prétendu* had long ago promised him that, in the event of the

prétendu's marriage, he, Thiers, should be *l'ami de la maison*—and in France *l'ami de la maison* has generally got "a better time of it" than the legitimate spouse. "C'est le plus heureux des trois." I am alluding to Louis Napoleon's miscarried attempt at Boulogne when he issued a "decree" "deposing" the Bourbons for ever, and appointing the historian of the "Consulate and the Empire" chief of the Provisional Government.

Thiers did not abandon his cherished dream, though. In four years France would have to choose another President, and he was looking forward, as he thought secretly, to that period, in order to have that dream realised. I append one of my uncle's notes, merely dated '53, consequently shortly after M. Thiers returned to France from his exile.

"The other day I was talking to the Emperor about Thiers and his return, and asking what the effect of that return would be. 'I am at a loss to guess,' was the answer. 'That's why I allowed him to return; it will not be so difficult to watch him from near as from afar. He will be quiet for a little while, and then he'll plot once more against me, for as long as there is no *régime* in France with Thiers at the very summit of it, nay, with Thiers as its incarnation, no monarch nor President will ever enjoy immunity from Thiers' attempts to oust him. Thiers has made up his mind to be President

of the French Republic before he dies. To those who know him, the thing admits of no doubt: his every action, his every word betrays the wish. Shortly after my election to the Presidency, he came to me one morning on no apparent business; in fact, he came far too frequently, and he had always some idea to suggest. After a little desultory talk, by which I was not deceived in the least, he came to the point. He asked me what official costume I was going to adopt, whether it was true that I was hesitating between that of a general of division and that of a general of the National Guard. I said I was not quite decided, that I would leave the matter in abeyance for a little while. 'Take my advice,' he said at last; 'adopt neither the one nor the other. I feel convinced that the nation will be delighted to see its *civic* chief-magistrate adopt civilian dress. Besides, if you were to adopt a military costume, your successor might be awkwardly situated if he could not do the same.' It was telling me in so many words," the Emperor went on, "'I'll be succeeding you in four years, and I cannot very well put myself into a general's uniform.'"

M. Thiers, I frankly confess, is not a figure that appeals to me. I would fain have done with it as soon as possible. I like it less than Talleyrand's, for Talleyrand had some private virtues which were utterly lacking in Thiers. I

prefer the cynic, and even the sceptic, to the hypocrite, and, in my opinion, Thiers was an arch-hypocrite. Only in two instances does he unbosom himself freely, and in both instances he is sorry for it almost the moment afterwards. The first time (in 1850) it is to M. Benoît-Champy, who, during the greater part of the Second Empire, was the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Department of the Seine. Next morning he inquires whether M. Benoît-Champy is a trustworthy man, likely to keep a secret. The second time (in 1852) his confidant of the moment is Mr. Senior, whose valuable book I have not by me, though I remember pretty well the substance of the conversation to which I would draw attention. It is to the effect that his (Thiers') authority was frequently impaired by his being suspected of working for the return of the constitutional monarchy. Thiers declares the suspicion to be unfounded, and categorically denies being an Orleanist. He admits to having a sincere regard and liking for the Duchesse d'Orléans (the Comte de Paris' mother) and her children, but he disclaims all allegiance to the Orleans family, which has not the slightest claim on him, which has always persecuted him, which he has always opposed. Two years previously, in the conversation with M. Benoît-Champy, he does not broach a word of having opposed the Orleans family; on the contrary, he says that he

has served them all his life, though his services have been rewarded with ingratitude. Nevertheless "he would hail the return of Louis-Philippe with joy" (textual).

"In virtue of my birth," he goes on to say to Mr. Senior, "I belong to the people." (Another falsehood, in spite of *Larousse*, which states that he was the son of a dock-labourer at Marseilles; and of Balzac, who averred that Thiers was the son of a blacksmith at Aix.) At the end of this chapter I will give a few particulars of Thiers' family. I will do the same for MacMahon, and, if possible, for Grévy. Those concerning Thiers are almost unknown, but I need not insist upon them here.

This man, professedly of the people, confides, moreover, to Mr. Senior, that he is a Bonapartist by education, and that he belongs to the aristocracy by taste, habits, and association. He disclaims all allegiance to the *bourgeoisie*, as he has disclaimed all allegiance to the Orleans family. "I have no sympathy whatsoever with the middle classes," he says in so many words, "nor with the political systems that give them power." The fusionists fared equally badly at his hands, for they had excluded from their programme the adoption of the Comte de Paris; they pinned their faith on the chances of the Comte de Chambord (otherwise Henri V.), in which chances Thiers did not believe at all, because the Comte

de Chambord had no child. "In fact," winds up Thiers, and this last sentence is textual, for in the study of him it cannot fail to impress itself accurately on the memory, "in fact, as far as France is concerned, I believe in nothing" ("Je ne crois à rien en France").

But, as in the case of his conversation with M. Benoît-Champy, Thiers would fain recall his words as soon as he has uttered them. He is virtually frightened at his own frankness, and his mind knows no rest afterwards, lest these words should go forth to the world. He is aware that the eminent Englishman to whom he has revealed his inmost thoughts keeps a diary, and for the rest of his life the dread of this diary being published, and by its revelations overthrowing his fabric of deception, haunts him by day and night. Almost every Englishman with whom Thiers comes in contact during that period is cross-examined to that effect. For hypocrite though he be, face to face with himself he cherishes no illusions as to the degree of confidence with which he inspires the various dynastic factions in France. He may and does attempt to traverse the charges of mendacity and plotting preferred against him by Frenchmen, by charging them in his turn with interested motives; he may even do this with exalted personages, such as the Princess Metternich and the Prince de Joinville, but he feels that such a counter-accusation would absolutely fail

against the eminent professor of political economy at Oxford, whom every one of note in France knows to be an absolutely impartial observer, and incapable of distorting facts and statements. For six months after the death of Mr. Senior, which happened in 1864, Thiers was in a most violent state of excitement, which never subsided entirely; but the publication of the dreaded "Conversations" was spared to him after all, for they appeared only a twelvemonth after his death.

Enough. I have been led into penning an indictment when I only intended to write some anecdotal notes, and it is too late to repair the mistake with regard to the man who, to use the words of Lamartine, "had sufficient saltpetre in him to blow up ten governments; who carried the contempt of his own party to a length surprising in so young a politician." (This was said in the spring of 1830.) "For that contempt," added the poet, "comes, as a rule, only with old age."

I mean to return to Thiers as President of the Republic amidst his surroundings at the Prefecture at Versailles, and at the Elysée-Bourbon; meanwhile I append the promised particulars of his family history.

Louis-Adolphe Thiers was born at Marseilles on the 15th April 1797, of parents who were apparently in a good position, for the civil register

describes the father, Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers, as a *propriétaire* (*Anglicé*, an owner of landed or household property). On the face of it, this looks probable enough, seeing that Thiers' maternal grandfather was an advocate to the provincial parliament, and keeper of the Marseilles archives. Thiers' mother, whose name was Marie-Madeleine Amic, was the daughter of a notable merchant of the same city, who for some time occupied the important post of what at present we should term the President of the Marseilles Chamber of Commerce at Constantinople, where he married the maternal aunt of the poets Joseph and André Chenier. Hence the legends about Thiers' obscure and humble origin are simply so much fiction.

But though Thiers' parentage is by no means enveloped in mystery, Thiers' father would not have been out of place as the hero of a novel, or better still, of an extravagant melodrama, such as our grandparents loved to see. At the birth of his son, Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers, *propriétaire*, is absent from Marseilles. In those days the law required that the new-born child should testify to its own existence by being taken to the *Mairie*, accompanied by its father and two witnesses. In this instance, citizen Marie-Siméon Rostan, *officier de santé*—read *surgeon*, as distinct from physician —takes the father's place, and presents the babe to the official charged with registering its birth.

In fact, neither the son nor mother sets eyes on or hears from Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers for more than thirty years. It is only after 1830, when Thiers has started on his political career, that "papa" presents himself one fine morning, and in a scene which reminds one of that of *Les Saltimbanques* of Dumersan and Varin, claims relationship.

What had become of Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers during those thirty years? In 1879, consequently two years after the death of the famous historian, M. Achille Gastaldy of Mentone, whose mother was first-cousin to M. Thiers on the father's side, tried to tell us in a *brochure*, dedicated to the historian's widow. But the author had frequently to confess himself at a loss, and was probably compelled to put a curb on his pen, seeing to whom he dedicated his little book. It would appear, though, that Thiers senior travelled a great deal during those thirty years, and was engaged in many speculations, good and bad, mostly bad. So far M. Gastaldy. If during that time Thiers *père* did not increase his store, he at any rate increased his progeny, to the discomfort of his famous son, who subsequently seems to have had all of them on his hands. Not that he provided very royally for them or for *his* mother, but, nevertheless, they, the brothers and sisters, gave him considerable trouble. In "An Englishman in Paris," there is an account of one of these sisters who,

in the forties, opened a *table-d'hôte* on the Boulevards, and proclaimed far and wide her relationship to the statesman. That was Mme. Ripert, who claimed to be the legitimate daughter of Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers by an Italian lady, whom he, her father, had married at Bologna. Mme. Ripert was undoubtedly a match for *le petit bonhomme*, for though she failed to draw money from him—a feat which all those who knew him voted to be almost impossible, the sign-board of the *table-d'hôte*, on which the relationship was duly set forth, disappeared after a little while, and she and her husband were provided with snug berths—of course under Government. Mme. Brunet, another half-sister, *but by a different mother*, did not fare quite so well. During the life of her half-brother, the Government gave her a small tobacco shop; but in 1883, when she herself was past eighty, she was very poor; nevertheless the very rich Mlle. Dosne, the heiress, I believe, to most of Thiers' property, positively refused to come to her assistance. A long correspondence ensued in the papers, and Mme. Brunet proved conclusively, at any rate somewhat too conclusively to be pleasant to Thiers' ungenerous sister-in-law, that she was Thiers' half-sister. Her mother was a demoiselle Eléonore Euphrasie Chevalier, cousin to the well-known deputy Dupont (de l'Eure).

The two half-brothers, Germain and Louiset

Thiers, were the fruits of the marriage (?) of Pierre-Louis-Marie Thiers with the Italian lady. Germain, though I do not find it stated anywhere, must have been the non-commissioned officer who, in 1822, divulged the plot of Colonel Caron for the deliverance of the prisoners implicated in the conspiracy of two years previously against the Bourbon monarchy, which conspiracy is known as the "Conspiracy of Belfort." At any rate, I feel certain that this non-commissioned officer's name was Germain Thiers. Whether he was known at that time to his half-brother Adolphe, I am unable to say; but later on he was appointed Chief Secretary to the French Consulate at Ancona.

Louiset was not quite so useful a member of society. He had inherited his father's taste for travelling, and followed the occupation of a courier—that is, when he could get an engagement. When unemployed, he worried his brother for money. His visits were paid in the early morning. But Thiers himself was the early worm, who refused to be caught loosening his purse-strings by no matter how early a bird, for he generally rose before five. Louiset managed, however, to squeeze a few *louis* out of him now and then.

In the last paragraph but one I have placed a mark of interrogation behind the word marriage. Was Thiers senior really married to the Italian

lady? Was he also married to the cousin of Dupont (de l'Eure)? I have an idea he had gone through the ceremony of marriage with both women, else his famous son would not have assisted his father's offspring, even to the small extent he did. Thiers senior seems to have practised matrimonially what his son practised politically. He espoused any—every woman who gave him a chance, with the mental reservation of throwing her over when convenient, just as Thiers junior espoused every *régime* which afforded him a chance of revelling in power. The father was a profligate carnally, the son a profligate politically.

A far different man was Thiers' immediate successor in office. When endeavouring to point out the motives that swayed Thiers, Grévy, and Carnot in their acceptance of the presidential dignity, I was bound to admit that, practically, Mac-Mahon had no motive at all, either personal or patriotic. He was not influenced by monetary considerations, albeit that he was comparatively a poor man. At his resignation his modest fortune was found to be seriously impaired, for he gave with a lavish hand; and during his tenancy of the Elysée, the expenses far exceeded the presidential income. Though by no means a profound thinker or a brilliant talker, Mac-Mahon had his fair share of sound common-sense—in the somewhat narrow meaning of the

word, perhaps—and he fostered no illusions with regard to his potentiality of regenerating France, at any rate politically. After that, the reader may well ask why Marie-Patrice de Mac-Mahon did not decline the honour conferred upon him.

It was either Colbert or Louvois who refused to give a certain nobleman the governorship of a province, on the ground that he was incapable of ruling his own wife. Part of the suffrages that made Mac-Mahon President of the Third Republic were given on the not altogether groundless assumption that in all but military matters Madame la Maréchale ruled her husband. It was pretty well the last attempt in France to import "petticoat influence" into politics, and the attempt—I cannot too much insist upon it, in view of what I have already said—was not due to the Republicans. The Duchesse de Magenta is a daughter of the house of Castries, whose militant Legitimism and ostentatious religious observance go hand-in-hand. The partisans of the late Comte de Chambord were distinctly under the impression that in the Duchesse they had found another Jeanne d'Arc who this time would rid their country peaceably of their native enemies, as the peasant girl of Domrémy had endeavoured to drive out the alien. It is a moot point with those who profess to know, whether Madame la Duchesse herself did not inspire the Legitimists with that idea. Such

Republicans as voted for the Marshal, because almost the entire Left abstained from voting, formed a more correct estimate of the soldier's character. There was no doubt in their minds of his innate honesty. They knew that they had not elected a Cromwell, but they also knew that they had not elected a Monk, and that, "come what might," the Duchesse's influence over her husband, however great, would fail to make a cat's-paw of him for the restoration either of a Bourbon, a d'Orléans, or a Bonaparte.

They knew that, placed in a position of trust, his obstinate uprightness would get the better of his dynastic sentiments; and General Fleury first, and the Comte de Chambord afterwards, found to their cost how correct the Republicans' judgment had been. The erstwhile Master of the Horse to Napoleon III. was, to use the right expression, "sent away with a flea in his ear" when he came to propose an Imperialist movement. The posthumous son of the Duc de Berry (*l'enfant du miracle*) was treated even more unceremoniously, for, after waiting for three days at the Comte de Vaussay's in Versailles, he had to return whence he came without as much as a glimpse of the President. "These things are as yet not written in the chronicles of nineteenth-century France." Nor is it generally known that it was then, and not until then, that "the Henri V. whom Mac-Mahon spoilt in the

making" penned his modern version of the fable of "The Sour Grapes" in the shape of a manifesto entitled "The White Flag." Such was the result of Mac-Mahon's passive obstinacy, lined with unswerving honesty. And here we must try to distinguish between passive obstinacy and active will-power. Mac-Mahon had a good deal of the former, very little of the latter even in his young days, and none in his old age. It was his obstinacy that made him hold the Malakoff against overwhelming odds when he had planted his flag on it; it was the lack of active will-power that made him, a Legitimist, vote for the life-Presidency of Louis Napoleon in 1852. He himself told the story to the Emperor fifteen years later at Oran, on the very spot where he recorded his vote. "I intended to vote against you, sire, but I was to vote the last," he said. "The infantry came up and voted for you to a man; the cavalry followed, and there were a few sparse votes against you; the artillery increased the number of adverse votes; and the punishment battalion, which brought up the rear, voted unanimously 'No.' I could not very well go with the worst behaved part of my army, so I voted 'Yes.'" It was this same lack of active will-power, which lack must have been very patent to the Duchesse de Magenta, that made her cast her chivalrous husband for the part of a second-rate Monk in a drama, the final act of

which was a ballet-like apotheosis of the Third Republic. I am referring to the *fêtes* "decreed" by Gambetta and Co. at the opening of the Exhibition of 1878, which *fêtes*, to all intents and purposes, have been continued ever since—though with less *éclat*—on the 14th July of every year. It was this same lack of active will-power that caused the descendant of Patrick Mac-Mahon of Torrodile[1] to become for some time

[1] I append an authentic record of the family of Marshal Mac-Mahon from the capitulation of Limerick to the battle of Magenta. It may prove interesting to English and American readers:—"Patrick Mac-Mahon, of Torrodile, in the county of Limerick, was married to Margaret, daughter of John O'Sullivan, in the county of Cork, of the House of O'Sullivan Beare. Honourably identified with the cause of the last of the Stuarts, he sheathed his sword at the Treaty of Limerick, and retired with his wife—a lady of the rarest beauty and virtue—to the friendly shores of France. Here his son, John Mac-Mahon, of Autun (in the Department of the Saône-et-Loire), married an heiress, and was created Count d'Equilly. On the 28th September 1794 the Count applied to the Irish Government of that day, accompanying his application with the necessary fees, &c., for the officers of 'Ulster King-at-Arms,' to have his genealogy, together with the records, &c., of his family, duly authenticated, collected, and recorded, with all necessary verification, in order that his children and their posterity in France might have all-sufficient proof of the proud fact that they were Irish. All this was accordingly done, as may be seen in the records in Birmingham Tower, Dublin Castle, countersigned by the then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and with the various other requisite signatures. In those records he is described as of 'the noble family, paternally, of Mac-Mahon of Clonderala (in Clare) and maternally of the noble family of O'Sullivan of Beare.' He was the grandfather of the Marshal, Duke of Magenta. The Count's genealogy commences in the middle of the fifteenth century, and traces him through eight generations as follows: Terence Mac-Mahon, proprietor of Clonderala, married Helena, daughter of Maurice Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, died 1472, and was interred

the tool of the Broglies, Fourtous, and finally, more or less of a political warming-pan for the Republicans, with Gambetta at their head—Gambetta, "Ce Monsieur," as Marshal Mac-Mahon

in the monastery of Ashelin, in Munster. He was succeeded by his son Donatus Mac-Mahon, who married Honora O'Brien, of the noble family of Thomond; and his son Terence Mac-Mahon, Esq., married Joanna, daughter of John MacNamara, Esq., of Dohaghtin, commonly styled 'MacNamara Reagh,' and had a son, Bernard Mac-Mahon, Esq., whose wife was Margarita, daughter of Donatus O'Brien, of Daugh. Mortogh Mac-Mahon, son of Bernard, married Eleonora, daughter of William O'Nelan, of Emri, colonel of a regiment of horse in the army of Charles I., and was father of Maurice Mac-Mahon, Esq., whose wife, Helena, was daughter of Maurice Fitzgerald, Esq., of Ballinoe, Knight of Glinn. Mortogh Mac-Mahon, son of Maurice, married Helena, daughter of Emanuel MacSheehy, Esq., of Ballylinan, and was father of the above-named Patrick Mac-Mahon, who married Margarita, daughter of John O'Sullivan, Esq., mother of John, first Count d'Equilly. The descent of Count Mac-Mahon, maternally, through the O'Sullivans, is as follows: Mortogh O'Sullivan Beare, of Bantry, in the county of Cork, married Maryann, daughter of James, Lord Desmond, and dying, was interred, 1541, in the Convent of Friars Minors, Cork. His son, John O'Sullivan, of Bantry, married Joanna, daughter of Gerald de Courcey, Baron of Kinsale, and died 1578, leaving Daniel O'Sullivan, Esq., his son, who married Anna, daughter of Christopher O'Driscoll, of Baltimore, in the county of Cork, and died at Madrid, leaving his son, John O'Sullivan, of Bantry, Esq., who married Margaret, daughter of James O'Donovan, of Rosecarbery, Esq. Bartholomew O'Sullivan, son of John, was colonel in the army of James II. at the siege of Limerick, and married Helena, daughter of Thomas Fitzmaurice, Baron of Kerry, by whom he had Major John O'Sullivan, of Bantry, who married Honoria, daughter of Robert MacCarthy, of 'Castro Leonino' (Castlelyons), in the county of Cork, Esq., grandson of Daniel MacCarthy, Lord of Glancare, and Margaret, his wife, daughter of Donogh, Lord Desmond, and died 1731. Their daughter was Margarita, who married Patrick Mac-Mahon, Esq., of Torrodile."—*Extract from one of the series of articles published by "The Nation," in June* 1859, *on the occasion of the battle of Magenta.*

called him, who could no more judge a man of Mac-Mahon's stamp than "General" Booth could judge of a John Wesley.

I am not exaggerating in saying that Mac-Mahon finally became the warming-pan for the Republicans; it would be no exaggeration to call Mac-Mahon the virtual founder of the Third Republic, the founder in spite of himself, for a republic was a form of government he detested even more than he despised the so-called incarnation of it in the form of a Gambetta. Lest my statement as to his being virtually the founder of the Third Republic should seem a mere flippant assertion for the sake of effect, I quote textually the conclusion of a conversation between the late M. Eugène Pelletan, the father of M. Camille Pelletan (Clemenceau's lieutenant), of M. Eugène Pelletan—who was one of the staunchest and most upright Republicans that ever lived—and the Comte Henry d'Ideville, one of the staunchest, most upright, and able Royalists it has ever been my lot to meet. The conversation took place one May morning, in the year 1878, on the Quai Voltaire.

"I can well understand your being violently irritated, nay, exasperated, with that poor man (Mac-Mahon)," said the Republican; "but we, there is no doubt of it, appreciate him exceedingly. Of course you, from your point of view, are justified in judging him very severely, for he has

disappointed all your hopes. But as far as we Republicans are concerned, we could not wish for a more respectful and docile functionary at the head of the Republic. Thanks to him, our Government enjoys the consideration and esteem of foreign nations, and the world's opinion, recovered from its fright, is gradually accepting our new institutions. In short, Mac-Mahon is the most marvellous pioneer we could possibly wish for. Without the least ambition, without the slightest will of his own, without the faintest prestige, he allows his ministers and M. Dufaure to govern in his name, and does not raise the smallest obstacle to the working of the Constitution. In that way he is acclimatising the Republic in France better than any of us could have done. We could not wish for a better man, and assuredly when the years of the Septennate shall have expired, we will renew the mission of the illustrious Marshal.

"Nay, I'll go further still, and say, that if M. Thiers had remained in power, he, with his great individuality, despotic temperament, and impatience of contradiction, could not have failed to provoke conflicts with the Chamber, and would have given umbrage to many. What would have happened then? I'll tell you. One fine morning there would have been the great danger that the former minister of Louis Philippe, finding it impossible to rule the Republicans according to his

will, to make them dance to his fiddling, feeling himself growing old, and seeing his influence on the wane, would have brought back the monarchy among us out of sheer spite. How grateful we ought to be, then, to the reactionaries for having overthrown and replaced him by this Marshal, whom we can never praise sufficiently."

"Without the least ambition, without the slightest will of his own, without the faintest prestige," said Pelletan. The words summed up the whole of Mac-Mahon's character better than a hundred pages of psychological analysis could have done. The lack of will-power I have already touched upon; the lack of ambition was equally conspicuous. I am not at all certain that Mac-Mahon was greatly elated when he had his dukedom bestowed upon him in '59. From the genealogy I have appended, it will be evident that no title, however lofty, could enhance his social status. It must be remembered also by whom the title was conferred—by Louis Napoleon, the bugbear of the greater part of the Faubourg St. Germain, to which Mac-Mahon had never ceased to belong, first, by reason of his own inclinations and birth; secondly, in virtue of his marriage with Mlle. de Castries. The title was, moreover, the ostensible reward for Mac-Mahon's share in the successful initial moves of a policy the final aim of which must have been as patent to the most short-sighted Legitimists as it was

repulsive to all, Mac-Mahon included, namely, the eventual spoliation of the Holy Father. No amount of assurance to the contrary from Napoleon III. could allay the fears of, or deceive the Legitimists on that point, even if it deceived the Emperor himself, which is quite possible, for subsequent events proved that he spoke in good faith when he declared that no Italian army, however victorious, should ever proceed further than the gates of Rome as long as he lived. His purely military advancement must, of course, have been gratifying to Mac-Mahon, although not later than six years and a half ago I was given to understand inferentially—mind, I repeat, *inferentially*, and lay great stress on the word [1]—that he would willingly have declined the great honour, which meant also a terrible responsibility for the simple-minded soldier, who, in spite of himself, was pitchforked into politics; this gentleman, *sans peur et sans reproche*, who, beneath a somewhat stern exterior, was kindness itself to every one around him, was modest beyond compare, so modest, in fact, as to have seriously embarrassed those paid trumpeters of fame, yclept journalists, in the hour of his greatest triumph. I remember perfectly all the events

[1] In November 1887 I had an interview with General Trochu at his residence in the Rue Traversière, at Tours. I pledged my word that not a word of what transpired between us should be revealed until after his death. The old soldier spoke most kindly of the Marshal, but I cannot say more.

of the year '59, for, though I was but a lad of seventeen, I was an assiduous reader of newspapers. There were a great many particulars of the battle of Magenta, but the victor himself stubbornly refused to be drawn out. "What is the use of asking for particulars of Mac-Mahon's career?" wrote one of those journalists almost immediately after the engagement; "what is the use of asking us, when Mac-Mahon himself refuses to enlighten us on that and other points, and simply says that he has done exactly what every other general has done and would do under similar circumstances."

"Without the faintest prestige," said Pelletan; by which he meant "the faintest political prestige," for it flattered and still flatters French pride to think or to delude itself into the belief that, but for the accident that befell Mac-Mahon on that ill-fated morning of Sedan, he would have been able to stop the advance of the Germans for good.

One may well doubt whether that delusion was ever shared to any appreciable extent by the honest, valiant soldier himself. To have imagined such a reversal of misfortune would have argued the possession on his part of a sanguineness of disposition, a buoyancy of temperament, and a vividness of imagination, all of which were absolutely lacking. Of all the qualities that seem, as it were, to be the moral

and mental appanage of the race whence he sprang, Mac-Mahon had only preserved one—his reckless daring; the rest had in the course of several generations entirely vanished, and been replaced by a sound but exceedingly restricted common-sense which forbade even the faintest dream of *his attempting* the retrieval of France's disasters by force of arms. Whether his faith in the recuperative power of his country in military matters was sufficiently strong to inspire him with something more than hope for the future, it would be difficult to say, for Mac-Mahon was a reticent man. This reticence may have been due, first, to that sound common-sense; secondly, to a faint consciousness of his being a rare and curious specimen of the happy man *sans le vouloir*, and that therefore his lack of active will-power was no drawback to him. I am by no means convinced that he had even that faint consciousness, for I strongly suspect the late Marshal—and I had many opportunities of observing him—of having been not only a happy man *sans le vouloir*, but a happy man *sans le savoir*.

After the peace of Utrecht, Marshal Villars sent a deputation to Marlborough to compliment him on his victories in Flanders. "The secret of my success," said Churchill modestly, "means simply this—I made a hundred blunders: my adversaries made a hundred and one." It would

be more than unjust to depreciate the military talents — as distinct from the strategical and tactical—of a soldier like Mac-Mahon, who, if the whole truth were known, never laid much stress upon the possession of either; but the student of history cannot but be aware that this hundred-and-first blunder which would have reduced Mac-Mahon in the estimation of his countrymen to the level of a Wimpffen, a Trochu, a Ducrot, and even of a Bourbaki, though perhaps not to that of a Bazaine, was mercifully averted from him by chance in the shape of the splinter of a shell early in the morning of September 1st, 1870. In a German adaptation of Lord Lytton's "Night and Morning," by Charlotte Birch Pfeiffer—not to be confounded with Ida Pfeiffer—Lord Lilburne, the aristocratic villain of the play, limps in at the very moment that Beaufort has been killed by a fall from off his horse. "He could not have broken his neck at a more favourable opportunity," he chuckles. The same might be said with regard to Mac-Mahon's mishap. He could not have been wounded at an opportunity more favourable to himself; for it saved him the humiliation of putting his signature to the capitulation of Sedan; it left his countrymen under the pleasing delusion that he might have retrieved his crushing defeat at Reichshofen by a signal victory on the banks of the Meuse. The halo of Magenta was

dimmed—not destroyed. That's why I called him the happy man *sans le vouloir*, and perhaps *sans le savoir*. His common-sense lay in not jeopardising this goodwill of his countrymen towards him by a show of individuality, except once, and this was undoubtedly the mistake of his life. That he repented of it, I have good reason to believe; the pity of it is, that this repentance bred an indifference almost bordering upon stolidity, from which he never departed until the day of his death. I need scarcely say that I mean a stolidity with regard to public affairs. In private life he was amiable to a degree, though not demonstrative. His modesty, both in public and private life, I have already touched upon; it was utterly unaffected, as the following story will show. In 1884 a friend of mine went for a fortnight's stay to Jersey and Guernsey. It appears that a firm of excursion agents, in addition to the brakes provided for the accommodation of their patrons, had secured the services of a photographer, who presented each member of the party with a picture of the group to which he or she happened to belong for the time being. A young matron declined to form part of such a miscellaneous gathering. "I am sorry, madame," said the photographer, "for there are some very eminent personages now and then in these groups. Here is one I took a fortnight ago. Do you know

that old gentleman and the lady by his side? It is the Duke of Magenta and the Duchess." The artist had spoken the truth. Two descendants of two of the noblest families in Europe had cheerfully accepted a kind attention from which the *bourgeoise* had shrunk.

When Mac-Mahon resigned the Presidentship, simplicity became the order of the day once more with him. I have seen him, not once, but a score of times, early in the morning in the Rue de la Paix, with his wife on his arm, looking at the shops and pricing things like the simplest couple of *bourgeois*. Both Mac-Mahon's predecessor and his immediate successor saved money at the Elysée. Mac-Mahon left it poorer than he entered, and but for the Duchess's rich relations, would have left it in debt. We shall meet with Mac-Mahon again at the Presidency.

CHAPTER XI.

Three Presidents of the Republic (*continued*)—M. Jules Grévy—His spotless political past — The truth about his famous amendment — The origin of his fall as a President — M. Grévy's early career — His acquaintance with Alfred de Musset—The love-letters of Alfred de Musset to George Sand—My uncle at Musset's funeral—My uncle's notes about Grévy — Théodore Barrière, the famous play-wright — M. Grévy's wonderful memory—M. Grévy's fondness for women's society — Madame Grévy—Where she failed — M. Grévy's *mésalliance* — The sequel to the *mésalliance* — M. Grévy's literary attainments—His character a puzzle—M. Grévy's love of money—Anecdotes to that effect—A comparison between his greed and that of Thiers—M. Grévy's real age—His genealogy.

M. JULES GRÉVY was the first President of the Third Republic who took possession of the Elysée-Bourbon with a "clean slate," from the Republican's point of view, and against whom no reactionary could prefer the charge of having draped himself in the cast-off finery of the vanished *régimes*. From the moment Grévy made his appearance in the political arena (1848), nay, from the very moment he forced himself into notice as the legal defender of Philippet and Quignot, accused, like Barbès and Martin Bernard, of complicity in the insurrection of '39, Grévy fought with uplifted visor for

the Republican cause. There was not a single political inconsistency in his public career from the beginning to the end, for even his opposition to the appointment of a President of the Republic—with which opposition he was so often twitted since his acceptance of the dignity—was not only perfectly logical at the time being, but proved an almost inspired foresight into the immediate future. Grévy was not opposed to a President of the Republic, but to a President of the Republic raised to the position by a *plébiscite*, "for," argued he, "such a chief magistrate could, in the event of a conflict with the Chamber, take his stand upon the fact of owing no allegiance to the Chamber, seeing that the Chamber did not elect him, and consequently, on the plea, real or fictitious, of acting in the interest of the nation which chose him, oppose that Chamber to the bitter end, nay, dissolve it by force as an assembly of enemies of the public weal." I am giving the spirit, though perhaps not the letter, of his argument, for, as I have already had occasion to remark more than once, I do not profess to write history. I repeat, there was not a single political inconsistency in Grévy's public career from beginning to end, and when he fell, the fall was not due to a political mistake or an unconstitutional encroachment on his part, but to circumstances which had their origin in his private life. There probably never was

a more glaringly "ridiculous want of proportion between offence and punishment" than in Grévy's ante-Presidential peccadillo and its consequences, which culminated in the "Caffarel scandal," and finally compelled him to vacate the Presidential chair.

"A man who is not sometimes a fool is always one," said Paley; and if judged by that axiom, Grévy may fairly be considered to have been a wise man. Unlike Maîtres Henri Brisson, Charles Floquet, Léon Gambetta, and a dozen others whose names have become identified with the fortunes of the Third Republic, Maître Jules Grévy, though well known for his Republican opinions, did not attempt to make those opinions a stepping-stone to success in his profession. Tradition credits him with being among the assailants of the barracks in the Rue de Babylone during the Revolution of 1830, but one may well doubt this, seeing that, according to those who knew him—and my uncles were among the number of his acquaintances, though the acquaintance seems never to have ripened into friendship, he was always disinclined to physical exertion, unless it was connected with sport. Notwithstanding this reputed bodily indolence, and an almost insatiable craving for sleep, he made his mark very soon after having been called to the bar, mainly by the exercise of a truly phenomenal memory, which stood him in excellent stead till

the very end of his life, and invested him with a peculiar charm as a *causeur*. In his early manhood he seems to have been what the French call "*un bon garçon*," what we call "a good fellow," though not exactly a jolly good fellow, for even at the age of thirty he was very demure, not to say grave. A few hours before his election as President of the Republic in January '79, M. Edmond About said in my hearing, and in that of several other journalists standing by—"Grévy is fond of good wine, he has an eye for a good-looking woman, and is sufficiently grave withal; he is 'cut out' for a President of the French Republic. (Grévy est buveur, galant et grave, c'est le President qu'il faut aux Français.)" The future President was then in his seventy-second year; but the compliment, and it was intended as such, was as deserved at that moment as it would have been some thirty-five years before, at which period the young barrister made the acquaintance of Alfred de Musset at the Café de la Régence, where he became the poet's almost constant opponent at chess, previous to his becoming the poet's confidant and legal adviser in a case which, had it been brought into court, would have probably proved the most interesting literary *cause célèbre* of the century. It was shortly after Musset's rupture with George Sand, and his return heart-broken from Venice. Musset, who knew George Sand's peculiar tendency for turn-

ing every scrap of paper to account, was anxious to have his love-letters back. He felt convinced that sooner or later he would figure as the hero of one of her books, that his letters would be utilised; he knew that he could prevent neither the one thing nor the other—that even if George Sand returned the letters, she would preserve copies of them; nevertheless, he wanted them back. Though Musset did not die until twenty years after, he was already on the downward path; *absinthe* had begun to do its deadly work, albeit that the intermittent flashes of lucidity were marked by work which a uniformly sober life would perhaps have failed to produce; but he was obstinate to a degree, whether sober or the reverse. All this I learned many years after the event; but it was on the very day of Musset's funeral in '57 that I heard for the first time the name of the man who was to be the third President of the Third Republic. It happened in this way. My uncles had known both the Mussets rather intimately between the thirties and forties, but the brothers' visits to our home, especially those of the younger, had, in the latter years of his life, become very rare. I remember, though, seeing him once during the year and a half that elapsed between my arrival in Paris and his death. I was too young then to appreciate the privilege. At the time of his death I knew something of his poems, not much, for my relatives were commend-

ably anxious that I should not know too much at so early an age. The little I did know, however, made me very eager to see his funeral, for I felt convinced that the whole of literary and artistic Paris would be there. I had not read Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero-Worship" at the time, but had come instinctively to the conclusion that, "take them in whatever way you will, great men are always profitable company." My elder grand-uncle being confined to his room with a bad leg, I had to stay at home to keep *him* company instead; the younger went alone.

"Well, Mark," said his brother, when his junior returned, "I suppose there was an enormous crowd?"

"Very enormous, brother," replied Mark bitterly. "I counted them."

"How could you count such a crowd?"

"Very easily. Apart from his family and a few of his friends, there were, when we left the house, exactly seventeen persons at the door, whom I would be at a loss to classify unless I called them spectators. Three of these were very indifferent spectators, for they deserted us before we got half-a-mile on our way, for the superior attraction of a regiment that went by with its band at its head. The drum-major and the 'jingling Jimmy' proved too much for them. I would rather say no more about it."

They sat quite still for a little while; then my

elder uncle asked—"Were any of his Café de la Régence acquaintances there?"

"Yes," answered my uncle Mark, "M. Jules Grévy; no one else."

"Ah," was the other's comment, "M. Jules Grévy is a downright good fellow; his heart is in the right place."

I had entirely forgotten the name of M. Jules Grévy in connection with the above incident, when I was reminded of it, after my uncles' death, by a note in the younger's handwriting. This was nearly two years before the outbreak of the Franco-German War, when no one dreamt of the honours in store for M. Grévy, although he had risen to the top of his profession. The note is far too long to be given *in extenso*, albeit that it would be interesting enough, especially to students of the French drama, seeing that it deals in reality with an episode in the life of one of the foremost French play-wrights of the reigns of Louis Philippe and Napoleon III.—Théodore Barrière, whom at one time my uncles —they were inveterate matchmakers—tried to marry to a wealthy Dutch girl living in Paris with her family. The note throws, moreover, a curious light on the French laws regulating the control of parents over their children; but, I repeat, I can only condense it.

It was well known that even at the outset of his dramatic career Théodore Barrière earned

a fair amount of money. As it was equally well known that Barrière had no expensive tastes, save in the matter of cigars, which he liked good and large, and of which he consumed a great many in the course of each day, it surprised those who knew him to see him turn every now and then to one of his friends, and borrow a twenty-franc piece. Whither did the money go, then? To his mother, who was the most curious specimen of greed and improvidence combined which it would be possible to find. Barrière did not seem to mind it, for he was very fond of her. He was *not* equally fond of his father, and of the latter's brother, both of whom pretended to look upon the rising young play-wright as a mere trifler, whose works, compared to theirs, did not deserve a moment's consideration. They would have fain compelled him to remain bending over the engraver's bench—I think they, the father and the uncle, were engravers also, who beguiled their leisure hours, the sire by versifying some of Molière's prose works, the sire's brother by converting into prose *Le Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*, &c. They would have fain prevented Barrière from writing "the rubbish" he wrote, the proceeds of which "rubbish" they, however, appropriated almost to a cent, and which "rubbish" was the means of providing the whole of the family with comforts they had not enjoyed before. Their

attempts to treat Barrière as a minor had hitherto proved unsuccessful, notwithstanding the fact that Barrière was under age at the date of the first attempt, and albeit that even in the France of the present day a man of forty or fifty may be so treated by his family if they can obtain the necessary authority. My uncles called the *Conseil Judiciaire* the "chapel of ease of the madhouse." We may suppose, however, that even among the lawyers consulted by the two elder Barrières, there was not one sufficiently daring to make an application to a judge in the case of a young fellow who delighted Paris audiences by his wit and pointed satire when he was barely twenty, for Barrière had already then obtained a certain measure of his success, though his great popularity only began with *La Vie de Bohème*, written in collaboration with Henri Murger. Then the brothers thought their chance had come. Instead of applying to this or that pettifogging lawyer, as they had done hitherto, they consulted a member of the French bar who had already won a reputation. They intended to base their application upon the young playwright's association "with a notoriously immoral individual," the said Henri Murger, "the author of a scandalously obscene novel, entitled *Scenes de la Vie de Bohème*." The barrister showed them the door. "They had applied to him," says my uncle's note, "because

they had heard that he was shortly to figure in the law-suit to be brought against George Sand by Alfred de Musset for the restitution of the latter's letters to the former. But Musset dared not face the ordeal of a public trial, for both his constitution and his brain were ruined by that pernicious mixture of beer, *absinthe*, and brandy, which, I believe, he was in the habit of taking; and the barrister had, moreover, given him plainly to understand that there would be 'a tremendous scandal,' 'though,' he added, 'we will gain the day. It's somewhat out of my ordinary line of practice, but I do not mind that.' The barrister was M. Jules Grévy, who during the Second Republic distinguished himself by his opposition to the appointment of a President of the Republic.

"I have an idea," the note goes on, "that M. Grévy would have been as good as his word, and gained the day. I have not seen M. Grévy for a number of years. I have heard that he has occupied the highest post of honour his fellow-barristers could confer, and I am not surprised, for even as a comparatively young man, he struck me as being possessed not only of considerable abilities, but of infinite tact. The fact of his having succeeded in gaining the friendship and confidence of Alfred de Musset, and of his having kept these for a length of time, speaks volumes in his favour, for it is not libelling the poet's memory to say that the path of constant inter-

course with him was beset with thorns—nay, Dumas was not far wrong when he called Musset himself 'a large bundle of thorns.' Musset was touchy to a degree, and, what was worse, did not admit the possibility of other people being at all susceptible to his frequently rude behaviour. The most remarkable thing about M. Grévy was his memory. Paul de Musset told me one day that he had tested it in various ways, and never known it to fail. It was sufficient to give him a line of a classic or modern masterpiece—provided, of course, that he was acquainted with it, to have the rest 'reeled off' without a moment's break."

It would appear from the same note, which I condense still further, and which was evidently written in 1868, or, at any rate, completed in that year, for it mentions "M. Grévy's election to the Chamber"—it would appear, I say, that every one, except Paul de Musset, was surprised at seeing the young and outwardly grave barrister accept the obviously sensational case against George Sand. But Alfred de Musset's elder brother, who, like M. Ernest Daudet in our own days, had to bear the penalty of his junior's genius—the comparison is only partially just, for Paul de Musset ranks higher as a writer than M. Ernest Daudet—was, nevertheless, an excellent reader of character, and the very sedate demeanour of M. Grévy did not impose upon him. "Paul de Musset told me," my uncle writes, "that M. Grévy is not only

very fond of women's society, but that he is a great favourite with them, that he admirably understands their tempers, their dispositions, and their whims. *He never hurries matters*, least of all does he pose as a lady-killer, or broken-hearted victim of unrequited passion. He lays deliberate siege to their hearts or imaginations, he does not attempt to take them by storm, and in his own quiet way gives them to understand that even in the event of surrender, they will be allowed to retire eventually with the banners of their fair fame flying, and the honours of war."

I began this little dissertation on M. Grévy's private character, by quoting Paley, to the effect that "a man who is not sometimes a fool is always one;" and added, that, judged by that axiom, Grévy was a wise man. I doubt whether M. Grévy would have agreed with me after December 1887, even if he agreed with me up to that date, which is also not very probable. For long before that he must have come to the conclusion that there are acts of folly which no previous wisdom can excuse, no subsequent wisdom can redeem, and that among these a *mésalliance* is the most irretrievable of all. Between the years 1880–1886, I saw Madame Grévy on several public occasions, and, as far as I could judge, she seemed a very worthy woman, albeit that Gambetta, whose opportunities of observing her were denied to me, said, "that though belonging to Narbonne, she

was by no means all honey." But whether honey or the reverse, she did not look the consort for a President of the French Republic, be that Republic never so democratic in theory. "In order to govern the French," remarked Gambetta on another occasion, "one must be violent in speech and moderate in acts." To impress French Republicans socially, and politically as well perhaps, the temporary mistress of the Elysée-Bourbon should be known to have democratic opinions, and be able to express them like the most elegant patrician. She must be a Claude Vignon (the first Madame Rouvier), an Olympe Audouard, a Juliette Lamber (Mme. Edmond Adam), a Marie Deraismes (one of the most charming champions of women's rights it has ever been my lot to meet, who died but very recently). She may even be a Louise Michel with a good dressmaker and *corsetière* at her back, in default of which she must be a Maréchale Lefèvre, in other words, a "Madame Sans-Gêne," like the Duchesse de Dantzic, who, however, was not the original Madame Sans-Gêne. She must be a Madame Sans-Gêne *ayant le mot pour rire*, and not only *not* ashamed of her humble origin, but ready to take a profitable opportunity now and then of actually boasting of it. Madame Grévy fulfilled neither of the conditions just named, she was essentially *la très petite bourgeoise*, than which there is no more unsympathetic woman when circumstances

happen to raise her out of the class whence she sprang. With reference to the word *mésalliance* I used just now, it might be objected that at the time of his marriage M. Grévy did not foresee the high destiny in store for him. The objection would absolutely hold good, but the union was, nevertheless, a *mésalliance*, for, to begin with, Jules Grévy belonged to a superior section of the French *bourgeoisie* to that whence his *fiancée* was sprung, who was the daughter of a tanner in an exceedingly small way of business at Narbonne, and a milliner by trade. Years ago I wrote in the preface to a book of mine—"A writer who has time to explain everything has not much time *to write;* a reader who cannot stop to ask himself 'What does this mean?' ought not to read." Hence it is not my intention to explain why *une demoiselle de bonne maison*—read a well-connected girl, by which I do not necessarily mean a girl of aristocratic or even higher middle-class parentage—is NOT apprenticed to millinery or dressmaking. There is a justified or unfounded prejudice among the French middle *bourgeoisie* against these callings to-day; the prejudice was much stronger fifty and sixty years ago. Parents will scrape, contrive, deny themselves the comforts of life, in order to do two things—to provide a *dot*, however small, for their daughters, and to keep them out of the real or supposed morally pestilential atmosphere of the

workroom. Secondly, Jules Grévy, when he met his future wife, was already in very fair practice. But that delectable habit of his of saying "sweet nothings" with the gravest possible face to every pretty woman he met, which habit never forsook him till he was nearly an octogenarian—that delectable habit proved too strong for him on that particular occasion also, and what was worse, the young woman, who was a provincial, and probably not accustomed to flirtations, *sauf pour le bon motif*, took him *au sérieux;* what was worse still, her brothers, who were his clients, took him *au grand sérieux;* there was probably no means of drawing back, except at the risk of gravely compromising his professional reputation. M. Grévy had not made the acquaintance of the Narbonne milliner in the ordinary way, she came to him in his professional capacity, and the French "order of barristers" exercises a more rigorous control over its members with regard to their actions, even in private life, than is generally known. Rather than incur exposure, not to say interference, Jules Grévy resigned himself to become a Benedick when he would have fain remained a bachelor.

It is not my intention to follow the future President of the Republic step by step, either in his forensic, political, private, or amative vicissitudes. Sufficient be it to say that in the opinion of those best qualified to know, the marriage was

considered as the first "serious" act of folly in M. Grévy's life. "Le mariage," says Victor Hugo, "est une greffe; ça prend bien ou ça prend mal." Whether Paley intended to have a man's wisdom grafted on in that way it is impossible to say. Nor can I assert with any degree of certainty that M. Grévy's domestic life was an unhappy one. Equally difficult is it to determine whether M. Grévy's second act of folly was a consequence of the first, or entirely separate. Certain is it, however, that while at Tours in 1871, he yielded to his fascination for a lady, but for whose influence his public career would have terminated differently. But for Mme. Pelouze, M. Grévy would not have become father-in-law to M. Daniel Wilson, Madame Pelouze's brother. But for M. Daniel Wilson, there would, perhaps, have been no "Caffarel scandal," and if there had been, M. Grévy would not have been affected by it.

This is not a mere sweeping assertion on my part. I could give verse and chapter for what I state, and the reader who has been kind enough to follow me through these notes will scarcely suspect me of an unreasoning sympathy either with the Republic or the men who have lorded it over France for the last twenty-three years. But if the late M. Grévy is to figure in these pages at all, he should be represented in his true light; this much is due to his memory and to common

fairness. He was the typical French *bourgeois* of the higher—though perhaps not of the highest—class. He had nearly all his virtues, and only one or two of his defects. Apart from his professional attainments, he had sterling literary capacities which, had he chosen to exercise them, would have probably carried him to the front ranks of authorship. His speech on the grave of Berryer was simply a masterpiece of composition, style, and critical as well as psychological acumen, enhanced by brilliant touches, and would, if printed, have dwarfed every essay on the illustrious orator and barrister. It lost much of its effect in delivery, for Jules Grévy was not an orator in the best sense of the word; his delivery was marred by a certain "flabbiness" of utterance, not of thought. He had, moreover, an exceedingly great love of literature and for *littérateurs;* their weaknesses as well as their genius appealed to him; and a great deal of his liking for the late M. Tirard sprang from the fact of the latter's resemblance to Alfred de Musset, in so far as a plain man can resemble a very good-looking one. I remember hearing M. Grévy speak at the dinner on the occasion of the reopening of the rebuilt Hotel de Ville on the evening of the 13th July 1882. All the bigwigs had been expatiating on the glories of a resuscitated republican France; there had been an almost uninterrupted flow of political platitudes. The President of the Republic scarcely

dwelt upon republican France; he gave politics a wide berth, but he said a good deal worth hearing about literary and artistic France. This love of literature and art is not a common feature in the French *bourgeois*, except in one of the highest type, and yet I have met many not belonging to the latter category who were thus endowed.

I have virtually come to a standstill in my attempted diagnosis, for I am practically confronted with an apparent contradiction which defies explanation as far as I know. I have referred once or twice to Jules Grévy's indolence, which, according to those who knew him best, almost amounted to laziness. It was decidedly not the indolence which prompts the middle-class Frenchman to retire from business at a comparatively early age, and on a really modest competency, in order to potter about his garden and villa, which he grandiloquently styles *terres* and *château*. It was not that kind of indolence, for up to his election as President of the Republic, and during the whole of his tenure of the chair at the Chamber, Jules Grévy continued to practise in the Law Courts, and to give consultations. Nor was it dislike to physical exertion, for he invariably walked from his domicile in the Rue Volney to the Gare St. Lazare and back, while the Chamber was still sitting at Versailles, and used the same mode of locomotion in the erstwhile royal residence itself. True, these are

not long distances; but, in addition to this, he was, almost up to the last year of his life, an ardent and indefatigable sportsman when in his native home in the Jura, and an equally ardent and indefatigable billiard player. The man who had all the best French, a good many of the Latin, and not a few of the Greek classics literally "at the tip of his tongue," could assuredly not be twitted with mental inactivity; not to mention his acknowledged superiority at chess. And yet, I repeat, those who knew him best, invariably spoke of him as being "phenomenally indolent."

Less open to doubt was Jules Grévy's greed of money, the besetting sin of the whole of the French *bourgeoisie*—one might say of almost the whole of the French nation, were it not for certain exceptions among the *noblesse;* which greed is productive of more tragedies and crimes than all other causes combined; which greed is so often dignified by the name of "frugality" by writers who have no opportunities of seeing it at work in all the natural and social relations of modern French life, and who fancy that MM. Zola, Daudet, and the late Guy de Maupassant have purposely exaggerated this curse for the sake of literary and dramatic effect, while, in reality, these authors have stopped short of the truth.

It was this greed that made Jules Grévy at first the laughing-stock of France, and subsequently the scapegoat of the misdoings of others,

for I *positively assert* not only that not a cent of the proceeds of that unsavoury "traffic in decorations" found its way into his pockets, but that he was completely ignorant of that traffic being directed from under his roof. But the world refused to believe it. When a man in Grévy's position demeans himself, for the sake of a few hundred francs, to ask for free passes on a railway for his servants, it is not surprising that he should be thought capable of selling his influence for several thousands of francs; and that request for free passes was not preferred once, but each time the President of the Republic moved from the Elysée-Bourbon to Mont-sous-Vaudrey and back again. It has been said that M. Grévy was not responsible for this undignified step, that his evil genius, who was always in want of money, penned those requests in his name, appropriating the money the railway tickets would have cost to his own use, for his net was made of very small meshes, and everything was fish that came to it. I have seen those letters, and they bear the President's signature, though the body of them was in a different handwriting. M. Grévy may possibly have signed these letters among other documents; there ought not to have been such a possibility. Mac-Mahon, who was undoubtedly Grévy's mental inferior, never signed a document without acquainting himself

with its contents—when he did sign, which was not often the case. He did not categorically refuse; he kept the petitioner for his signature in conversation for half-an-hour or so, persistently going away from the subject, and generally winding up with a "Je n'aime pas les paperasses et je ne signerai pas."

But even if the excuse held good in that one instance, it would fail in the two following stories, which, to my knowledge, have never been published, and which, for that reason, I select from among the hundred and odd I have in my possession.

M. Grévy owned a house—on the Boulevard Malesherbes, I think, but will not be certain—part of which had been taken on a very short agreement by M. Duclerc before he became Prime Minister. It so happened that one or two days after his nomination the quarter-day came round, on which he was to give notice of his intention to quit or to remain. Having his hands very full, the new Premier decided to stay. "Very well, M. le Ministre," said the concierge to whom the communication was made, "but I am obliged to tell you that the rent will be raised 2000 frs. per annum, consequently 500 frs. per quarter." "In that case," replied M. Duclerc, "I had better see your 'proprietor' first." "That's impossible," was the answer, "our proprietor sees no one, and his agent (*son homme d'affaires*),

foreseeing your objections, has told me that it will be useless to appeal to him, as he received positive instructions to that effect." After a moment or so, the concierge added something which was not on his part "a bit of gag," as actors would say: "Five hundred francs a quarter won't make much difference to M. le Ministre *now*." The man was probably repeating the words of the agent, who in his turn had probably repeated the words of the "proprietor." M. Duclerc refused, however, to look at things in that way, and made inquiries as to the name of his landlord, but in vain.[1] At the end of a week, Grévy, at the conclusion of a Ministerial Council, took him aside. "Don't trouble, my dear Duclerc, about finding out the name of your landlord; I am your landlord," he said with a smile. "I think it is but right that you should share your good fortune with some of your friends. I trust that you may remain in power for a long while, for I am determined that on the day of your quitting office your rent shall be reduced to the original figure." M. Duclerc's rent was never reduced. The above would make a good companion story to that of M. Thiers, who allowed

[1] I may remark that in Paris it is no uncommon thing for a tenant to be ignorant of the name of his landlord. He never sees him, all the business being transacted by the concierge. A friend of mine lived for five years in an apartment on the Boulevard Magenta, and at the end of his tenancy discovered that the owner of the house was Mlle. de Rothschild, whom he frequently met in society.

his mother 200 frs. per month when he was out of office, and 250 frs. when he was in. If the fall of his Ministry happened to take place in the current month, the deduction was made from the day of that fall; if, on the other hand, he happened to come into power during the current month, the increase was reckoned from the day of the announcement in *Le Moniteur*, by which device "the great Thiers" managed to save a sum varying from eight to nine francs, seeing that it must have taken him the best part of a week to constitute his Ministry. We have seen elsewhere that Thiers was not quite so careful of the nation's money when providing for his friends and acquaintances. Truth compels one to state, however, that on one occasion he tried to save France a milliard of francs; only—France failed to appreciate his intention. It was during the discussion of the preliminaries to the peace of '71, when he counselled the cession of Belfort, rather than the payment of the milliard of francs which Bismarck declared himself willing to take instead of that city. "Let us give him Belfort," said Thiers; "a town you can always recover; a milliard you can never recover."

Grévy's apparent solicitude for the Presidential bell, when he occupied the chair at the Palais-Bourbon, would have led one to expect equal care, on his part, in the husbanding of the country's property in more important matters,

and he probably exercised such care—where his own interests were not opposed to it. When there was a possible opportunity of shifting the burden of some of his expenses on to the State, he did not hesitate for a moment to follow his predecessor's example. The reader may not be aware of the figurative meaning of the word "*pot-de-vin.*" Littré tells us that it is "a present over and above the agreed price of a purchase or sale." Either the vendor or the purchaser, or both, may make such a present to the party who introduced them to one another; but there is no legal obligation to that effect—it is a purely voluntary gift. Some years ago a friend of the then President of the Republic was the intermediary in such a transaction; Grévy, I think, was the vendor, but I will not be certain. At any rate, he offered the traditional "*pot-de-vin,*" which he, Grévy, estimated at 7000 or 8000 francs. The friend, who was a neighbour of his in the Jura, declined the gift. "But I'll tell you what you may do with it," he said. "You may give it to our church, which is sadly in want of repairs." Grévy professed himself very pleased, and replied that he would look to the matter at once.

And, in fact, in less than a fortnight, workmen appeared on the spot, and the old church began to ring with the sound of hammer and chisel, to the intense delight of the *curé*, who, as the

work proceeded, went almost "off his head" with joy, for it was soon evident to him that the President—the President's friend had, in spite of the President's request, divulged the story to him under the seal of secrecy—not only meant to be as good as his word, but better. It was idle to speak of mere repairs in view of the money that was spent so lavishly; the President was simply "restoring" the mediæval place of worship to its pristine beauty. The President's friend could scarcely conceal his surprise and satisfaction, the latter sentiment not unmixed with a good deal of self-reproach, for, in spite of his friendship for the President, he had always credited him with being the reverse of liberal in money matters, and here he was actually spending at least double the amount of the "*pot-de-vin.*" The President's friend promised himself to atone for his unjust estimate of the President's character at the first possible opportunity, and, as luck would have it, he had not long to wait. Shortly after the completion of the works, he had business to transact in Paris, and at a dinner-party happened to sit next to M. Jacquin, the permanent "Directeur du Personnel" (read, Chief of the Staff) at the Ministry of Public Worship—one might almost say, the permanent Minister of Public Worship, for whosoever went and came at the tomb-like edifice in the Place Vendôme, M. Jacquin re-

mained. As a matter of course, the President's friend, being "full to bursting" of his subject, began to talk about it to his neighbour, and trying to ascertain as to the real amount of money expended. M. Jacquin, who may be alive for all I know, was a dry, lank individual, without an ounce of spare flesh on his bones, and considerably exercised by the ambition of becoming a member of the Chamber of Deputies; serviceable withal, and not devoid of talent. True to his promise, the President's friend had not mentioned the President's name once. "I think I can tell you the amount," said M. Jacquin at last; "for now that you speak of it, I remember some of the fellows wondering what possessed Cazot to go in for such an expense. Call to-morrow at the Place Vendôme." The amount spent was close upon 25,000 francs, but it did not come out of Grévy's pocket; the budget of Public Worship was charged with it. The President had saved his own 7000 or 8000 francs.

M. Grévy was always very reluctant to tell his age, and openly admitted that reluctance. At a dinner-party given by one of his friends in 1872, the future President of the Republic said with a smile, "People may try as much as they like, they will never know my real age." And, in fact, when M. Hérold, who was some time a minister of the Third Republic,

endeavoured to obtain definite particulars of M. Grévy's age for a new edition of *Vapereau*, M. Grévy persistently refused to supply them. "The archives of Mont-sous-Vaudrey were burnt in 1831," he said, "and you must do the best you can. You'll get no information from me." As a consequence, all M. Grévy's biographers give the year 1813 as that of his birth, while in reality he was born in 1807. An extract from the civil register of the commune of Mont-sous-Vaudrey, which was found recently at the civil tribunal of the arrondissement of the Dôle, Department of the Jura, puts an end to all doubt on the matter.

M. Grévy's staunch Republicanism was an heirloom. His grandfather accepted the function of Justice of the Peace in 1790, after the Constituent Assembly had reorganised the judiciary system of France. M. Grévy's father took service as a volunteer in 1792, was elected a major by his comrades, and only put down his arms after the enemy, repulsed from French soil, and defeated on his own territory, was compelled to sue for peace. Then he returned to Mont-sous-Vaudrey and assumed the management of the paternal estate, *La Grangerie;* but his occupation did not prevent him from bestowing a great deal of care on the education of his three sons. The Empire with all its glory, the Restoration with its quasi-attempts at intro-

ducing liberal institutions, did not for a moment succeed in modifying the Republican opinion of Jules Grévy's father. The son, in justice to his memory, be it said, was "a chip of the old block."

CHAPTER XII.

Round about the Elysée-Bourbon — What an invitation to the Tuileries meant; what an invitation to the Elysée means —My friend on M. Mollard, the "Introducteur des Ambassadeurs"—M. Mollard—His origin—His beginnings—How he became an employé at "Le Protocole"—His duties there—His functions at the beginning of the Third Republic —Some of his blunders—The *menu* on the occasion of the dinner to Archduke Albrecht — A quadrille d'honneur — A *mot* of Mac-Mahon—A *fête* at Versailles—A reception at the Ministry of Finance—M. Mollard's portrait—The massacre of the hats—M. Mollard and M. Grévy—The Presidency during Thiers' time—The Presidency during Mac-Mahon's time—M. Grévy from a social point of view—Madame Grévy—Madame Wilson, *née* Grévy—M. Daniel Wilson—M. Mollard and the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour—M. Mollard and the Sultan of Zanzibar's present—M. Mollard covets a horse—What he does with it—The guests at the Elysée during the presidency of M. Grévy—My barber at the Elysée—The story of 35,000 cigars.

TIMES were when the appearance at your front door—I mean the door of the house, and not that of the apartment—of a mounted trooper, handing your concierge an official-looking envelope, sealed with the Imperial arms, was calculated to enhance your credit with the janitor. The wrapper was supposed to contain, and often did contain, an invitation to a ball at the Tuileries, or for a five days' series at Compiègne or Fontainbleau; and, in spite of everything that has been

said to the contrary, such an invitation gave a man, however poor, a certain social standing with the middle *bourgeoisie*, and especially with his fellow-tenants, and more especially still with his landlord and the latter's *locum tenens*, the Cerberus in the porter's lodge. If the recipient of the invitation was practically solvent, punctual with his rent, and not niggardly with the tithes of his wood when it was stocked, and of his wine when it was bottled,[1] such an invitation, it would be thought, could scarcely raise him in the estimation of his landlord's *âme damnée*; yet it did. If, on the other hand, the recipient was known or suspected to be impecunious, and behindhand with his rent, if his wine was brought in in small quantities from the *épicier* or *mannezingue d'en face*, and his wood from the *charbonnier d'à côte*, the fact of the invitation was considered as the dawn of a more prosperous era for him. He was *somebody*, although only a *poor somebody*. The landlord was discreetly advised to "temporise;" the janitor became literally "a friend in court," for she or he never allowed importunate duns to get further than that courtyard; and though the landlord might be a direct descendant of Dickens' Patriarch of Bleeding-Heart Yard, and the creditors first-cousins to a Scotch tallyman, the

[1] The practice of presenting one's concierge with a certain quantity of wood and wine, when these two commodities are stored, prevails still, though not to the extent it did years ago.

poor somebody enjoyed a comparative period of rest; his entrances to, his exits from, his domicile were no longer moments of moral martyrdom to him.

These times are gone, perhaps never to return. An invitation to the mansion, originally built by the Comte d'Evreux, who was a kind of eighteenth-century *gendre de M. Poirier;* to the mansion which was the residence of Mme. de Pompadour before it became a miniature Chantilly, under the name of the Elysée-Bourbon—such an invitation no longer carries any social weight. It has occurred before now—under the presidency of M. Jules Grévy—that the *locataire* and the concierge received their invitations at the same time. "Did you go?" I asked my friend, who was the recipient of that honour. "Certainement," was the answer; "il ne faut pas déconsidérer le concierge. After all, it is not his fault any more than mine that he received an invitation. We apparently belong to the same set. I am not going to give myself airs because my brother is a 'big swell' among the Republicans, for my concierge's brother—if he have one—may be Prime Minister to-morrow. One thing is certain, the very fact of his receiving an invitation argues his being a man of importance from M. Mollard's point of view; for M. Mollard draws up the lists of guests, and I feel perfectly certain that M.

Mollard would not invite any one whom he considered a nobody."

I feel certain that, with the exception of a few members of the English Embassy in Paris, and an equal number of English newspaper correspondents in the French capital, there are not a dozen Englishmen who have ever heard the name of M. Mollard, let alone seen him; and yet the man is worth knowing, for until very recently he was not only the *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs*, that is, a kind of Republican Grand Chamberlain, but, moreover, the *Arbiter elegantiarum* of the official entertainments at the Presidency. A sketch of him and his doings will give the reader a better insight into the nature of those entertainments than half-a-dozen chapters of description.

The origin of M. Mollard is wrapt in obscurity. According to some, he was a very skilful goldsmith; according to others, he was a "working man who did not work," but spouted at political meetings, where he finally attracted the notice of Albert Martin, better known as "Albert l'Ouvrier," who died in Paris only a twelvemonth ago, obscure and forgotten—deservedly forgotten by all, except by those who consider the French counterpart of Eccles a hero, and the French counterpart of Sam Gerridge "un sale bourgeois" in the making. "Albert l'Ouvrier," to use the American expression, "went up like a rocket and

came down like the stick;" but his *protégé*, thanks to his really beautiful handwriting, managed to secure a modest situation at the offices of "Le Protocole,"[1] where he vegetated for more than twenty years, utilising his spare evening hours by playing the cornet at the Elysée Ménilmontant and other suburban ball-rooms. As we shall see directly, it was not a bad initiation into his subsequent functions of organiser of the Presidential *fêtes*. An apprenticeship at the gardens of the defunct Mabille, or of the equally defunct Château des Fleurs, or of the still existing Elsyée-Montmartre and Bullier's would not have answered the purpose as well; for the society that foregathers at the Elysée-Bourbon on "grand nights," and especially the younger part of that society, has many more points of resemblance with the *dramatis personæ* of Paul de Kock's novels than with the hysterical heroines and *blasés* heroes of

[1] In days gone by, the word "protocole" (*Anglicé*, protocol) was applied to the formulary used for drawing up various public acts. There was the notarial protocol, the protocol of process-serving, &c. &c. The diplomatic world has preserved the word and given it two decidedly distinct interpretations. It has applied the name both to the reports of diplomatic conferences, congresses, and conventions, and to the registers in which those reports are copied. At present, in French administrative language, the word is used to designate the *ensemble* of the formulas of courtesy regulating the correspondence between governments, and between governments and ministers. The "protocole" has tabulated the qualifications and titles given to sovereigns and ministers, &c. &c. M. de Freycinet has invented a much happier title than "protocole." He calls it "le livre des politesses." The office of "Le Protocole" in France is a branch of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Alphonse Daudet's and Guy de Maupassant's works. M. Mollard manages to impress the former; he would be simply laughed to scorn, even at the Elysée-Bourbon, by the latter.

In the appended footnote I have endeavoured to convey an idea of the duties assigned to "Le Protocole." It is more than doubtful whether M. Mollard ever mastered those duties thoroughly; but when the Empire fell with a crash and the "men of the fourth September" made a clean sweep of those to whom the traditions of etiquette and courtesy were as the air they breathed—for Napoleon III. had not made the mistake of dismissing them at his accession—M. Mollard was virtually the only one who possessed any knowledge at all of these matters. He did not become the head of "Le Protocole" at once: a dummy was placed over him, but he was practically consulted on all important occasions by the fast succeeding ministers. Gambetta suspected his ignorance; Freycinet felt certain of it, but still they consulted him. Thiers had no need of his services; he could have given his ministers all the information they wanted, although even he "made a hole in his manners," now and then, as for instance when Bismarck had to check him at one of the interviews at Ferrières; but Thiers was selfishness and vainglory personified, and it did not displease him to show to the outer world in general, to the Corps Diplomatique in particular,

the difference between himself and the men who surrounded him. Had he not said to Mr. Senior that by taste, habits, and associations, he belonged to the aristocracy, and was not this the opportunity to make good his claim without appearing to do so?

M. Mollard rose to the situation. At any rate, he thought he did. The knowledge he prides himself most upon is that involved in the "niceties" of leaving cards. He may listen to suggestions on other subjects; on that particular one he will not hear a word.[1] Whether he has a code of his own, or whether he has mixed several, it is impossible to say; certain is it that the *attachés* to the various embassies in Paris are as much puzzled as I am in that respect. For, with the fast-succeeding Administrations, the number of "bits of pasteboard" left by the brand-new, half-worn, and utterly used-up ministers at those embassies is enormous. Sometimes the corners of those cards are turned down; at others they are left intact. Sometimes they are left by the porters of the Ministries; at others by an *attaché* or secretary, driving round in the carriage of the minister—that is, if the minister have a carriage immediately after his entering upon office, or just before retiring. M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire was for more than a fortnight without a convey-

[1] I speak of him in the present tense, for, though greatly assisted by his son, he is still the guiding spirit.

ance of his own; he could not agree upon the price of hire with Brion. In several instances ministers have given up their carriages, for the sake of economy, before the fall of the Administration to which they belonged. One, M. Cazot, who went to the races at Longchamps in evening dress, put "P.P.C." on his cards when he retired from office. He was not leaving Paris, but he considered it the right thing to do. This time M. Mollard was furious, and gave him a good wigging, for M. Mollard has become familiar with those who lord it over France. If he does not call them by their names when they are present, he never refers in any other terms to them when they are absent. "I told Gontaud and Grévy," "Munster sent for me," "Ressmann called when I was out," &c. &c. These are his habitual expressions. One does not know whether to laugh or to be disgusted, but, as a rule, laughter gets the upper hand, for, take him for what he is, a sublimated butler, M. Mollard is not a bad fellow.

I have read somewhere—I believe in Mrs. Crosse's "Red-Letter Days"—an amusing anecdote of the poet Rogers' butler, who used virtually to control the number of his master's guests. M. Mollard to a certain extent did that, and more than that, long before he was the head of "Le Protocole;" he drew up the programmes of the official entertainments at the Presidency, at

the Palais-Bourbon, at the various Ministries—in fact, everywhere except at the Hotel-de-Ville, where there was the right man in the right place, the late M. Alphand. M. Mollard composed the *menus* of the dinners, he arranged the *quadrilles d'honneur*, and so forth. His fitness for all these tasks may be gathered from the following stories, which I have selected from a great number. To give them all would fill a volume—a volume that would probably rank as one of the most comic books ever published.

During Mac-Mahon's tenancy of the Presidential chair, Archduke Albrecht, the victor of Custozza, paid a visit to Paris, and the Marshal gave a dinner in his honour. Madame de Mac-Mahon's cook invented a new ice-pudding, and gave it a new name; which name, however, conveyed nothing to M. Mollard, who was charged with the drawing up of the *menu*. He bethought himself of a delicate compliment to the President of the Republic, leaving the feelings of the guest out of the question, and altered the name into that of "*Bombe glacée à la Magenta.*" I leave the reader to picture the face of Madame la Duchesse when the strip of printed cardboard stared her in the face just as she took her seat at the table. Her husband tried to soothe her. "After all, he did it out of compliment to me," he said; "a Republican master of the ceremonies is not bound to have the *Almanach de Gotha* by

heart, and to know that Archduke Albrecht is related to the Emperor of Austria."

The second blunder was perhaps less serious, but more productive of frank laughter from all the victims to it, including the Prince of Wales. It happened on the occasion of a ball given at the French Foreign Office, in the Exhibition year of 1878, in honour of the heir to the English throne. As far as I can recollect, M. Waddington was Minister of Foreign Affairs, for I was at the ball myself, and remember M. and Madame Waddington figuring in the *quadrille d'honneur.* Still, I will not be positive, for there have been something like thirty-six or thirty-seven Ministers of Foreign Affairs during the twenty-three years of existence of the Third Republic. The Prince and Princess of Wales, the late Duke d'Aosta, the Comte de Flandres, also figured in the quadrille; but M. Mollard had utterly forgotten to include the Chief Magistrate of France and his wife. Next morning, M. Mollard came to the Elysée in a very contrite state of mind. Like the true gentleman he was, Mac-Mahon made very light of the matter. "Never mind, my dear Mollard," he smiled; "perhaps you were right after all—I am somewhat too old to dance. David must have been about my age when he danced before the ark, and you know what happened. The Bible tells us that Michal, Saul's daughter and David's own wife, looked

out of the window and despised him. Old as I am, I object to being despised by any one in petticoats, whether it be a mother or a daughter." It is, as far as I know, the only clever thing standing to the record of Mac-Mahon; but it was more than clever, it was good-natured besides.

M. Mollard must have sorely tried Mac-Mahon's patience more than once, for, though the Marshal was utterly indifferent to personal homage, he was most punctilious with regard to the pomp and circumstance attaching to his office, and M. Mollard had not the most elementary knowledge of things. At the Marshal's advent to the Elysée, the free and easy running in and out of deputies and ministers ceased, the shabby carriages and spavined horses of his predecessor disappeared, to make room for well-appointed turn-outs and thoroughbred cattle. The servants wore powder, and on grand occasions the out-riders and coachmen wore wigs. M. Grévy was not fond of display, first of all, because it was irksome to him; secondly, because it cost money; thirdly, because he thought that the advanced section of the Republicans would resent it, for by that time the "amnestied" Communards had returned in shoals. Nevertheless, he endeavoured to get a presentable and experienced head coachman, and had overtures made to that effect to the coachman of the Comte

Bernard d'Harcourt. M. Mollard was entrusted with the mission. The coachman asked for a week to consider the matter, during which time he consulted the Count, who told him to please himself, while the coachman's fellow-servants advised him to decline the offer. "I cannot take service with M. Grévy," said the man when M. Mollard came for the answer; "for it would damage my prospects of getting another good situation." "Trompette is with M. Gambetta," protested M. Mollard jauntily; "he could enter any family to-morrow if he chose." "Trompette is a cook," was the reply. "Do you know your Bible, M. Mollard?" came the question immediately afterwards. "Not particularly; but why do you ask?" "Because it says, 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man;' and it might have added, Nor does it defile the man who provideth that which goeth into the mouth. I cannot take service with M. Grévy."

But though very patient with M. Mollard, the Marshal was very nigh getting angry with him once. It was during that same Exhibition year of which I have already spoken. The reader is aware that for nine years after the proclaiming of the Third Republic its Parliament sat at Versailles, and that, though during part of that time all ministerial business was conducted from Paris, the official residence of the President of the Republic was also in the erstwhile royal borough.

Of course, the Elysée-Bourbon was always held in readiness, and when in the capital—which was supposed to "be undergoing punishment" for its bad behaviour during the Commune—the Chief Magistrate took up his quarters there. The Prefecture of Versailles was, however, the centre of the Presidential orbit, for the palace, inseparably connected with the memory of the Bourbon dynasty, was rarely used, and then only on grand occasions. In October 1878, Marshal Mac-Mahon gave a magnificent *fête* there, the direction of which was, as usual, entrusted to M. Mollard. Everything went well, or comparatively well, until the guests, to the number of 15,000, began to think of going home. Chaos, pure and simple, set in there and then. During that October night numberless women with bare shoulders and bare arms were seen returning to the Versailles stations, where special trains were awaiting to convey them to Paris; they were escorted by men without hats, their coats almost torn to rags in their endeavours to obtain their partners' wraps. It was a sorrowful sight indeed. I have by me a note enumerating the flotsam and jetsam, in the shape of wearing apparel, resulting from the cyclone. It is as follows: 1532 overcoats; 544 opera-cloaks, capes, shawls, &c. &c.; 315 men's hats; a considerable number of umbrellas; 17 chignons —we may take it that they were torn off in the struggle; 9 wigs—a proof that we can "keep

our hair on" better than the other sex; and one pair of boots. The whole of the facetious articles written during the next fortnight were for their greater part devoted to attempts at elucidating the mystery of that pair of boots. Not a single writer alluded to Thackeray's Mr. Minchin, a proof that a generation had arisen which knew not the minor works of the author of "Vanity Fair."

I remarked just now that this time the Marshal's patience with M. Mollard was well-nigh exhausted. In spite of the tension between the President and the Republicans, the history of M. Mollard's "greater glory" would have come to an end then, but for an incident happening which put the honest old soldier into a thorough good temper—on the Rochefoucauldian principle, perhaps, "that other people's misfortunes make us cheerfully bear with our own."

During that year the *fêtes* and receptions succeeded one another very quickly, and a fortnight or so after that ill-fated October night, there was an important gathering at the Ministry of Finance. M. Mollard, whose confidence in himself was considerably shaken by the late event, felt that the slightest blunder on his part would be fatal to him. He was, above all, anxious about the organisation of the cloak-room, the rock on which he had split on the last occasion. He reviewed his staff on the morning of the entertain-

ment, and, notwithstanding the repeated assurances of the porters and ushers that they were fully competent and sufficiently numerous to deal with no matter what rush, insisted upon engaging a couple of supplementary hands.

And here I must break off for a moment to sketch M. Mollard "in his habit as he lived," as he probably lives still, for though he was replaced in his functions of *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs* by the Comte d'Ormesson shortly after M. Carnot's election to the Presidency, M. Mollard has—so far as I know—not resigned his other duties.[1]

It is greatly to M. Mollard's credit that the lofty position he had attained did not affect his republican simplicity. Like M. Gustave Humbert, one of the late Ministers of Justice and Keepers of the Seals, who, when in office, carried his own bottles of beer to the Ministry in the Place Vendôme "in order to have it good," M. Mollard has never forsaken the *mannezingue* where, in his less prosperous days, he used to "*tuer le ver*"—read, "take his early morning dram." A little while ago, I as good as said that, at the outset of his career, M. Mollard was a kind of French Eccles.

[1] M. le Comte d'Ormesson has recently accepted a diplomatic mission to Copenhagen, whither, owing to an accident, he has not gone as yet. He has been succeeded by M. de Bourqueney as *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs*. M. Mollard's son has, to a certain extent, replaced his father.

There is no more pride about M. Mollard than there was about the father-in-law of the Hon. George d'Alroy. With his livid flabby face and iron-grey, somewhat unkempt, whiskers, clear blue eyes, and pendulous abdomen, M. Mollard is not much to look at, either in repose or in motion; but the knowing, though not unkindly, smile puckering the self-satisfied mouth, bereft of several of its front teeth, redeems much of what otherwise would be positively disagreeable. He is hail fellow well met with all his old acquaintances, and with none more so than with the owner of the wine-shop near the Pont de l'Alma, close to which bridge he has taken up his quarters—over the stables which once formed part of the Imperial establishment. Morning after morning, year in year out, M. Mollard used to stand before that pewter counter, conversing affably with those around him, his toothless gums holding a somewhat valuable meerschaum—a present probably—his fur-lined coat, lined with rabbit skin, thrown carelessly back to show the inside. When the weather got too warm, the garment was carried over his arm, for, like Professor Pettifer in Mr. Sims' "London Day by Day," M. Mollard was exceedingly proud of his coat. Well, on the morning in question, when, after reviewing the staff at the Ministry of Finance, he made up his mind to engage a couple of supplementary hands,

M. Mollard, instead of directing his steps from the Rue de Rivoli to the Quai d'Orsay, made his way back to the wine-shop at the Pont de l'Alma. He had hit upon an idea, and was going to carry it out there and then. There had come to his friend the publican a couple of cousins from the country—big brawny rustics, determined to try their luck in Paris, and the publican had enlisted M. Mollard's sympathy in their behalf. M. Mollard considered this an excellent opportunity of giving them their chance of a *début* in the official world. Arrangements to that effect were made with the chawbacons in question, and in the evening they repaired to the Ministry of Finance, washed, combed, and dressed, and took up the stations in the cloak-room allotted to them by their patron. The latter in a few words initiated them into their duties, which, upon the face of it, were not difficult to perform. The cloak-rooms had been divided into sections of 300 numbers each, about 3000 invitations having been issued. Unfortunately, M. Mollard had not considered it necessary to inform his *protégés* of the difference between an opera-hat and an ordinary silk one. Odd as it may seem, in the land that has the honour of having given birth to Gibus, the convenient crush hat is not worn as often in the evening as in England, Russia, and Austria, though one may see Frenchmen—not exactly the best dressed Frenchmen—wear

them in the daytime. At that particular period, moreover, the opera-hat had been temporarily discarded for its more sightly rival, the silk one. I fancy that a few years ago a similar change of fashion was observable with us. At any rate, the proportion of silk hats worn that evening by the guests of the Minister of Finance and Madame la Ministre was as five to one opera-hat. And every one of the silk hats entrusted to the care of M. Mollard's *protégés* was religiously "telescoped" by them, then deposited on the top of the coat, and finally returned to its owner in that state. Fate so willed it that the first four or five men who availed themselves of the peasants' services wore opera-hats, which they flattened in the orthodox fashion by putting them against their chests. After that, every hat, whether silk or other, handed to them was subjected to the same process of "foreshortening," probably after its owner was gone, and when space became scant. The scene at the Ministry of Finance was, as Mac-Mahon called it, "the comic after-piece to the tragedy at Versailles," but it saved M. Mollard from dismissal. "My time is running short," said the Marshal; "besides, I could never do away with a man who afforded me ten minutes of such unalloyed amusement as Mollard has afforded me." The fact was, that the victor of Magenta roared outright when the scene was described to him, and the honest old soldier did

not laugh often. And thus it came about that M. Mollard was enabled to flourish during the whole time of M. Grévy's tenancy of the Elysée.

Flourish is the exact word, for, in spite of all I have written, M. Mollard had, previous to M. Grévy's advent, to put up with many reprimands both from Thiers and Mac-Mahon, and notably from Madame la Maréchale. Thiers was very tenacious about the opinions of Europe in general, and France in particular, in all that concerned etiquette—especially where that etiquette made no demands on his purse. His boast that he belonged to the aristocracy by taste, habit, and associations was not altogether an empty one. He had been accustomed to the pomp and circumstance of Louis-Philippe's court, which, inferior as they may have been to those at the court of the Bourbons, were, compared to the republican entertainments, as High Mass at the pro-cathedral to a monster meeting of the Salvation Army. During the whole of the thirties he had, moreover, frequented excellent society, and the juxtaposition with "people of quality" afforded him intense delight. When in 1871 the project of a monarchical restoration was debated, his first question was, "How will Madame Thiers and Mademoiselle Dosne be received at Court?" Hence, though he could not do much, he endeavoured to preserve a semblance of "good form" and elegance, as M. Mollard often found to

his cost. For he would not instruct M. Mollard: he took a fiendish delight in pointing out his blunders "after they had been committed." From Mac-Mahon and his wife Mollard might have learnt much, had his self-sufficiency, and especially his eager desire to please the Republicans rather than the President of the Republic, not stood in his way, for during the Marshal's occupancy of the mansion in the Faubourg St. Honoré, "good society" had not altogether deserted the *salons;* and whether they liked it or not, the Republicans had to lie low—more or less—conversationally, terpsichorically, and otherwise.

With the advent of M. Grévy all this changed, and M. Mollard, as the organiser of the Presidential balls, receptions, *fêtes*, and dinners, had it all his own way. There was no one to call his decisions in matters of etiquette into question. The President himself was not absolutely ignorant of the ways of polite society: there was a fatherly dignity about him with men which inspired a kind of respect, and an insinuating grace with women which could not fail to please when he chose to exert it; but he did not always choose; he was making his pile, and that, if the truth must be told, seemed all-sufficient for him. During the five years of my last permanent stay in Paris as the correspondent of a London paper, I frequently went to the Presidential *soirees;* at three distinct times

I found M. Grévy dozing in a capacious arm-chair in a small apartment adjoining the grand reception room. But even when he put his best foot forward, there was a striking difference between M. Grévy and his two predecessors. One evening, in the presence of about two score of people, myself among the number, Princess Hohenlohe said, "I can assure you that M. Grévy makes an excellent President of the Republic. Among all but the best lawyers at Dresden or Stuttgart, you would look in vain for his equal, let alone for his superior." It was a left-handed compliment, and I have no reason to suppose that it was intended as other than such. I am afraid it was not altogether the right thing to say, whatever the princess may have thought, considering her position in France. At the same time, I have an idea that, for the nonce, the princess allowed her liking for M. de Freycinet to run away with her discretion. I have already alluded to the friendship existing at one time between the family of the German Ambassador, and that of the sometime Minister for Foreign Affairs; and it is an open secret that the latter aimed at succeeding M. Grévy in the Presidential chair. Nevertheless, the truth underlying the ambassadress' remark is almost incontestable: M. Grévy took his honours and the duties involved in them "un peu trop à la bonne franquette." From personal observation I feel

convinced that Jules Grévy might have been an almost matchless *talon rouge*, if he had not been so inordinately wedded to felt slippers, mentally, morally, and sumptuarily. "Do whatsoever you like, but do not let's have any fuss," was his stereotyped remark at the termination of every ministerial council. It was this constant craving for the *schlafrock*, the besetting sin of the middle-class, professional German, that provoked Princess Hohenlohe's criticism. The first and foremost result of this love of ease was M. Mollard's omnipotence at the Elysée in all ceremonial matters, for I repeat there was no one to contest his decisions, and least of all Mme. Grévy, who, worthy woman as she may have been, was not fitted by previous training to set M. Mollard right. The home she had occupied from 1848 to 1870, in the Rue de Richelieu, had been conducted on the narrowest *bourgeois* principles. Her enforced removal to a more luxurious apartment in the Rue Volney frightened her, and notwithstanding her husband's increased income, she was for ever trying to keep down expenses. M. Grévy was an admirable judge of good wine, and his partial restocking of the cellars of the presidency at the Palais-Bourbon and Versailles almost drove her out of her wits. She would fain have put aside the 81,000 francs per annum her husband received as President of the Chamber and Deputy

(72,000 francs and 9000 francs), without spending a penny of these; and the desire to hoard grew stronger as the emoluments increased from 81,000 to 1,200,000 francs. Between the two they had raised a daughter, whose ideal of magnificent manhood was M. Capoul, the tenor, and who ended up by marrying M. Daniel Wilson, the brother of her father's "bosom friend." Madame Daniel Wilson was scarcely calculated to imbue M. Mollard with great respect for her authority on questions of elegance.

Of M. Daniel Wilson himself I would say as little as possible. One early summer's morning, while living at Ferney, Voltaire took it into his head to see the sun rise. He climbed one of the hills hard by, followed by his man-servant. At the sight of the glorious spectacle, the philosopher lifted up his hands in ecstasy. His enthusiasm got the better of his scepticism. "Seigneur Dieu, tu es grand, beau et tout-puissant!" he exclaimed. "Mais quant au Seigneur ton fils . . ." he continued; then looked round and noticed the valet listening attentively. "Quant au Seigneur ton fils . . . je préfére ne pas le discuter."

Even so, I prefer not to discuss M. Grévy's son-in-law. I said just now that M. Grévy might have become an almost matchless *talon rouge*, but for his inveterate love of felt slippers. In

virtue of his association with the Duc de Gramont-Caderousse—the same who killed the journalist Dillon in a duel, and provided for his widow—and other young bloods of the Empire, M. Daniel Wilson was supposed to be *très talon rouge.* Those who had the opportunity of watching him very closely could not but come to the conclusion that the heel, however red it might be, was fastened to a very ordinary boot indeed, not to say to a "godillot."[1] Enough of M. Daniel Wilson, who was not the man to worry about the dignity attaching to the office of the chief magistrate of France; hence, M. Mollard did not meet with any opposition from him, as long as the bills for the entertainments were kept within small limits.

M. Mollard was shrewd enough to perceive that, with such a family around him, he had to assert his authority now and then or else lose his footing altogether. Of course his most convenient victim was the President himself, and the blunders he made him commit defy description. Here is one, however: the rest may be imagined from that. On the occasion of the distribution of new colours to the army in July 1880, there was a grand State performance at the Opera. There could be no doubt about the significance of that

[1] A "godillot" is the nickname for the infantry soldier's boot. The Godillots were the army contractors who supplied the shoe leather (?) of the French army during the last war. Godillot himself started life, I believe, as a banker's clerk.

ceremony; it had a military significance or none at all. The President of the Republic, with his sound sense, felt this well enough, and in default of a uniform to don, he intended to display the only outward sign that linked him with the military institutions of the country, namely, the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour. M. Mollard put his foot down, and the President of the Republic made his appearance without his insignia of Grand Master of the Order.

I called M. Mollard a butler, and as a butler he had an eye to his perquisites. A crystal vase, nearly a yard high, and filled with attar of roses —a present from the Sultan of Zanzibar to the *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs*, found its way to a perfumer's in exchange for 2500 francs. A mission from the Emperor of Morocco brought ten horses for M. Grévy: M. Mollard managed to work the oracle so well, although vicariously— for, as an English journalist who knows French excellently well, said of him, "He speaks no foreign language but his own"—that only nine of the animals found their way to M. Grévy's stables, the tenth was sold at the French Tattersall's in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

Is it necessary, after all this, to insist on the truth of the remark I made at the beginning of this chapter, that an invitation to the Elysée-Bourbon does not enhance a man's social standing? I think not. Nor does it enhance a man's

opinion of himself to know that he is going to an entertainment where detectives are posted at the entrances to the card-rooms in order to warn the more innocent guests of the presence of cheats and blacklegs. This is a fact for which I can give my authority if necessary. And yet, a visit to the Elysée-Bourbon on one of those grand nights was not without its compensations. It brought a man in contact with a section of society, a good many components of which—I mean of the section—he had no opportunity of studying elsewhere, unless he himself happened to belong to that section. I am not speaking of myself in this instance: the force of circumstances has brought me in contact with all classes of French society, from the highest to the lowest. I take no credit to myself for this somewhat wide experience, and I trust there is no disgrace attached to it. At various periods of my life I have been obliged to write in order to live; the habit of writing has become so strong that I would not care, perhaps, to live without writing; but throughout evil and good, my eyes have been the faithful allies of my pen, and I fear that I have led my allies into places where angels would have hesitated to tread. When I said just now that a visit to the Elysée-Bourbon on a grand night brought a man in contact with a section of society, a good many members of which section he had no opportunity of studying

elsewhere, unless he happened to belong to that section, I was not thinking of myself. I was thinking of men who have had neither the difficulties I have had to contend with, nor the sorry facilities I have enjoyed; who have felt neither the inclination to play voluntarily the part of a minor Haroun-al-Rashid, nor the spur of want to goad them into doing so. I was thinking of men who, in virtue of their birth and position, are debarred from seeing *les nouvelles couches* in their habit as they live, and who therefore must have enjoyed the sight of them at the Elysée, albeit that neither their attire nor their demeanour was absolutely normal on such occasions. "Me permettrez vous de vous dire, milord, que vous ne connaissez pas Paris," said M. de Fourtoul to a late English ambassador. "Dans vos visites à mes compatriotes, vous n'etes jamais monté plus haut qu'au premier ou au second étage au-dessus de l'entresol; et le vrai Paris ne demeure ni au premier, ni au second." The majority of the guests at the Elysée-Bourbon during M. Grévy's time decidedly did *not* live on the first or second floor, and that was what ought to have made them interesting to those who did not merely come to sneer. They were decidedly more interesting than the immediate *entourage* of M. le Président; the Floquets, the Ferrys, the Andrieux, the Koechlins, and the rest of the *gros bonnets* of the Third Republic, who are connected (by

marriage mainly) with the great industrial families of Alsace-Lorraine, with *la noblesse républicaine*, as Mme. Floquet termed them recently. They are about as interesting as the majority of the prosperous, commercial and industrial elements elsewhere—with this difference, that they are, if possible, a little more pompous than the English or German aristocracy of commerce; and, what is more surprising, especially in France, their womankind are *too resplendent for words*. Every man and woman is a single-speech Hamilton, for one never hears them talk of anything else but the "crime" of the 2nd December 1851, the subsequent misdoings of the Empire, and the punishment of the "Highest" thereon. They are all Protestants, unless they are freethinkers, and the French Protestant is almost as calmly and impertinently confident of being able to assign the decrees of Providence to their true cause as the most ranting English Dissenter. Of the benefits the Empire conferred upon them by opening English markets to their products, this Republican nobility never breathes a syllable.

What afforded one a little more amusement was the group which called itself the "proscribed," though, at that particular moment, the "proscribed" had come back in shoals, and were coming back in greater numbers still. But they would not allow Jules Vallès the monopoly of

coining chapter-headings for the future martyrology of France. He had called himself *le deputé des fusillés;* they would call themselves the "proscribed." They did not say much: they strolled through the rooms in silence, stroking their long beards and scowling at every one, but especially at the Imperial monogram, which in those days had not been effaced from the walls of the Elysée. They did not express it in so many words; but their looks betokened that they meant to see to this. Unlike that of M. Maxime Lisbonne later on, their dress-coats did not smell of benzine.

The interesting part of the guests at the Elysée were the young men and girls who had come to enjoy themselves; the wives and daughters of the minor Government employés and their friends, to whom the balls at the Elysée were and are still an event in their lives. Neither the Comte d'Ormesson nor the Comte de Bourqueney would have done half as well with them as did M. Mollard, who now and then checked their exuberance as he would have checked it at Lemardelay's, Véfour's, or the Elysée-Ménilmontant — by telling their young men to take their companions to the refreshment rooms, where, all things considered, and the many temptations in the shape of delicacies the very name of which they did not know, they behaved a good deal better than the guests that I have seen at balls of far greater pretensions. The young officers who stood smiling at them—some-

what superciliously—ought to have remembered that famous episode in the life of the late M. Henri de Pène, when all the threats of their (the officers') predecessors failed to make him retract what he had written about their gorging. My barber, in the Avenue Trudaine, confided to me one day that he had an invitation to the Elysée. The morning after the entertainment he told me all about it. At supper he came upon an old crony of his, an erstwhile waiter of Chevet's, who looked after his creature comforts. "The only thing I object to," he said, "is the way in which most of the male guests fill their pockets with cigars. I smoked one in the smoking-room, and took a second to smoke on my way home."

I greatly approved of my tonsor's moderation, and, but for the fear of meddling with what did not concern me, would have written to M. Mollard to invite the barber again and again, for I considered and still consider him an ornament to Republican society. When the reader has cast his eye over the following lines, with which I must conclude these notes, he will agree with me on that point, however much he may disagree with me on others.

At a reception given by Gambetta in 1880, at the Palais-Bourbon, 10,000 cigars disappeared in less than half-an-hour.

At the inauguration of the Hôtel-de-Ville, on

the 13th July 1882, to which ceremony I have already referred in connection with the admirable speech of M. Grévy on that occasion, I happened to be in a small drawing-room whither M. Floquet, then Prefect of the Seine, had taken some of his more distinguished guests after dinner, in order to guard them somewhat from the surging crowd merely invited to the reception following the dinner. Lest I should be suspected of wishing to class myself among the distinguished guests, I hasten to add that I was taken thither by the late Lord Lyons, in order to be presented to the Burgomaster of Amsterdam. All at once a French 'Arry entered the room, his hat jauntily poised on his head, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, the remaining eight fingers drumming a tattoo on his manly chest. M. Floquet turned very pale; but the fellow meant no harm, he had merely come to have a closer look at the "swells." In another moment he strolled out again. A message was sent immediately to the usher, who stood at the top of the staircase, to remind the new-comers to take off their hats, a reminder not generally necessary in France. The *contretemps* did not occur again. In a little while, perhaps half-an-hour in all after the removal of the cloth, the air had become very close, and the Burgomaster, seeing that smoking was going on everywhere, asked M. Floquet for a cigar. They were all gone. The

late M. Alphand told me that the *régie* had sent 25,000. I think I was right in wishing to recommend my barber to the notice of M. Mollard as an ornament to his *soirées*. I feel confident that his modesty would have proved an example.

THE END.

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